

Sight and Sound



TV into film
'The Flintstones'
'Maverick'
'The Beverly
Hillbillies'

Down the tube

Teen movies:
'American Graffiti' to
'Reality Bites'

Legends:

Godard's 'Alphaville'
John Woo's 'The Killer'
Chris Marker and 'Vertigo'

Comic turns:

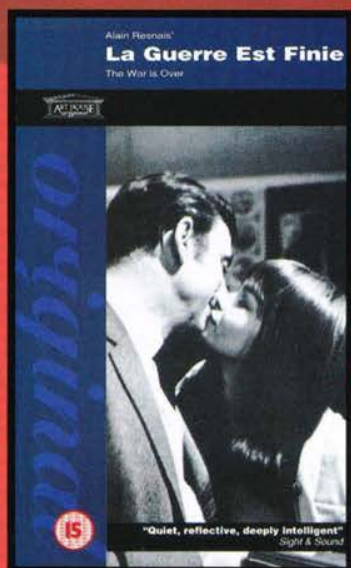
Rose Troche's lesbian 'Go Fish'
Edward Yang and his actors

Plus: Bea Campbell on 'Shopping'
Ronan Bennett on 'Shankill'

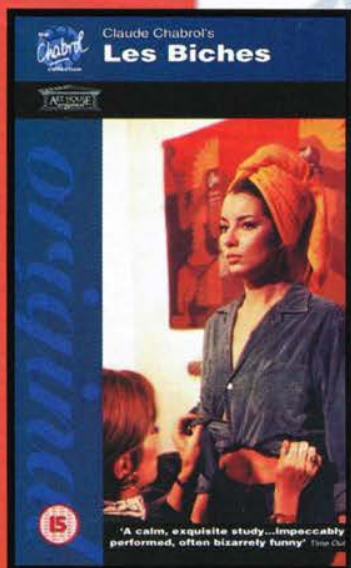




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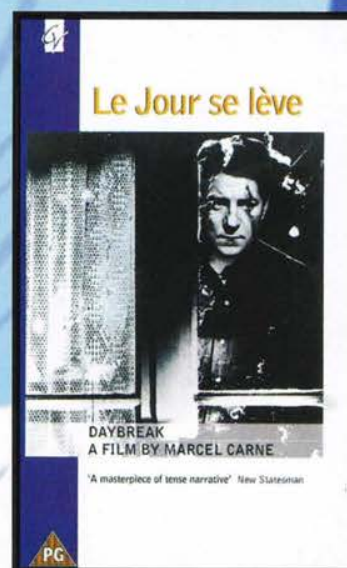
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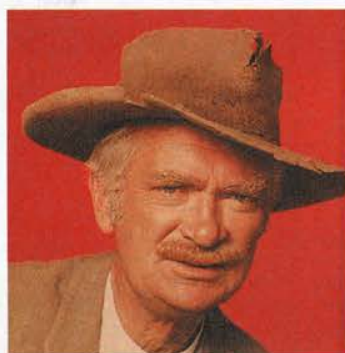
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Sight and Sound

July 1994



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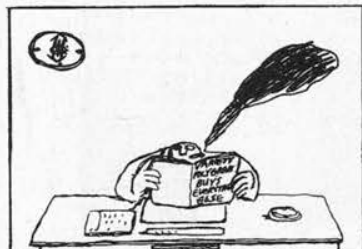
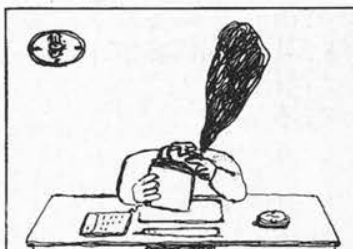
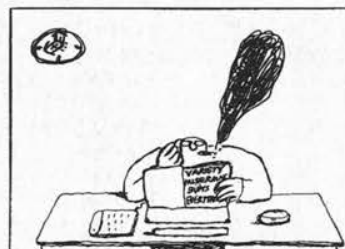
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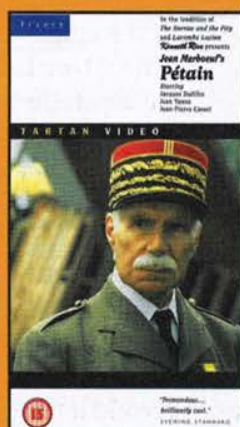
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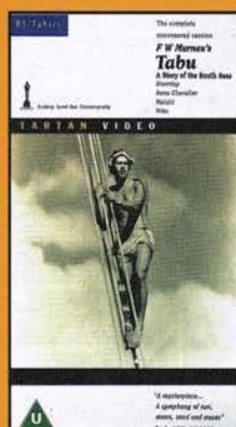
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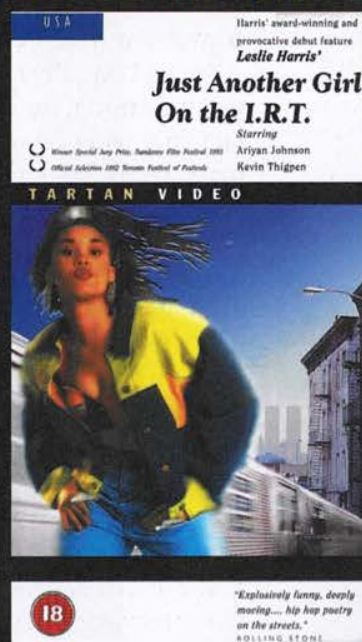
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In memory of

Dennis Potter

Contributors to this issue

Ronan Bennett's drama *A Man You Don't Meet Everyday* will be screened on Channel 4 in the autumn; he has a forthcoming play, *Marked For Place*, on Radio 4

Bea Campbell's most recent book is *Goliath: Britain's Dangerous Places*

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Chris Petit is a film-maker and writer. *Robinson*, a novel, is his most recent publication

Tony Rayns is the consultant on the BFI's *The Century of Cinema* television series

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Jon Savage is the author of the award-winning study of punk, *England's Dreaming*

Martin Walker is Washington correspondent of the *Guardian* and author of a recent study of the Cold War

Alan Yentob, Controller of BBC1, to whose keeping the playwright left one of his two posthumous works, remembers Dennis Potter

Like many of my generation, when I came to television, it was through the siren of television drama, and especially Dennis Potter's. He believed in television, that it could add meaning to people's lives. His passionate commitment was to the television set in the corner of the room, not to cinema or theatre. And part of his importance was just that commitment – not just what he did, but his conviction that it could happen nowhere else.

He was equally committed to every stage of programming. He was in no doubt about the fact that what he was writing were television plays, so it's not surprising that the things that affected him, and a lot of the material for his plays, came from the things that went on on television – often between the programmes. The commercials, the context in which his work would be seen, were always important to him.

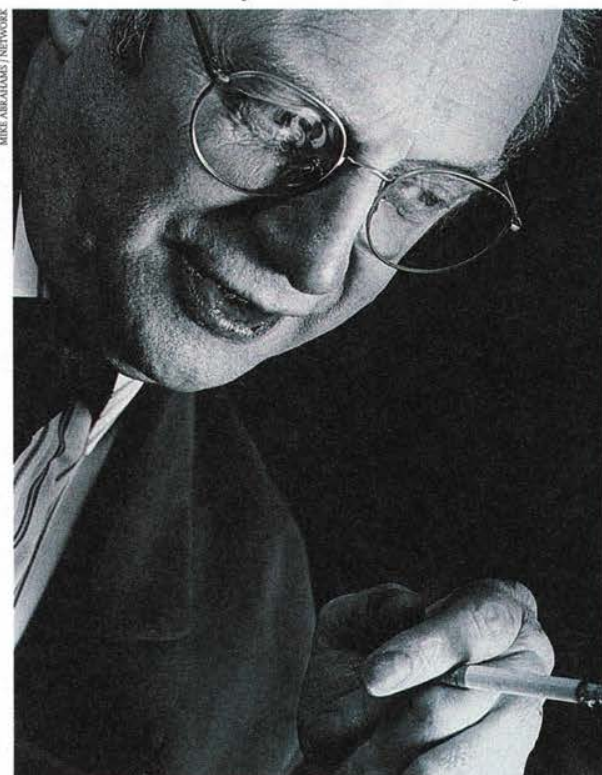
After *Pennies from Heaven*, everyone wondered what more he could do with the genre. But *The Singing Detective* was so remarkable that it made me want to go back and look at his plays again. So when I was Head of Music and Arts and a number of his dramas were screened again, we made an *Arena* programme about him. We did the interview in my house – Dennis always

wanted a formal setting, he never wanted it to be in his own home. I sensed that it was an occasion he was taking seriously. He is very revealing in that interview – it's very much on the record, he's not trying to make a television show as he might have done on other occasions. This was more private, and he talked in some depth about his life. I think we got on well because we shared a belief in television and what it can do and a desire to reinvent it all the time, not to take it for granted.

He was always interested in stretching the technical limits of television, which is unusual for a writer, less so for a director. You can see that in the very early work – in *Stand Up, Nigel Barton*. You also see his roots – his childhood in the Forest of Dean and the ambitions of a young man leaving home, trying to put aside those roots. You see his political and social ambitions. Then there's his love of language – in many ways he relished the language of the Church and he wasn't afraid of the expression of that language: its contrast with the empty rhetoric that he saw in politicians and advertising. There's the mixture of great aspiration, which you see in all his characters, and disappointment. As a writer who came from the working class, he had a certain expectation of television, of politics and the world, and when it wasn't fulfilled, he expressed his disappointment.

He believed that television must be somewhere where worthwhile things happen, where formula has not overtaken the personal voice. I think if television is part of British life in a serious way, then the quality of that life will be affected by how good television is. And anyone who cared about Dennis Potter believed that his plays made a difference to their lives.

My last memory of him is of sitting over breakfast, aware that this would probably be the last time we would meet. He was so determined to finish the script that nothing would stand in his way. He had a glass of champagne in one hand and morphine in the other. I joined him in the champagne. When we said goodbye, we hugged. I think the way he faced up to the end was both courageous and imaginative and was entirely stage-managed by him. He dignified television by announcing his death on it, and by committing himself to the work he was writing – his bequest. It was a spectacular exit.



Dennis Potter: born 17 May 1935; died 7 June 1994

The business

● Forget all the fuss about the Palme d'Or: the hottest title at this year's Cannes Film Festival could turn out to be neither *Pulp Fiction* nor *Three Colours: Red* but Michel Blanc's comedy, *Grosse Fatigue* (inelegantly translated in the subtitles as *Dead Tired*). Blanc's film is a hilarious in-joke about a star who keeps getting accused of crimes against the profession – like appropriating Gérard Depardieu's suite at the Carlton or sexually assaulting Josiane Balasko – until he discovers that the acts have all been perpetrated by a malevolent lookalike.

True, the film only picked up two fairly minor awards – Best Screenplay for Blanc and a technical prize for its special effects – and was given little more than a polite nod by the flocks of critics operating on the Croisette. But critics, the Croisette and Cannes itself are becoming a less significant part of the Festival International du Film. What really matter are the decisions taken at a pricey little spot just up the coast, on the road out of Antibes. And *Grosse Fatigue* certainly tickled a few fancies in that super-expensive neck of the pine woods.

Inevitably, of course, it was not so much the film itself that appealed to the top Hollywood honchos lurking in the secluded luxury of the Hotel du Cap – it is doubtful that any of them even bothered to trek in and see it – but the idea behind it. According to reports, virtually every major studio wants to remake the movie, with a list of potential leading stars ranging from Danny DeVito (who is about the same size as Blanc) to Robin Williams (who has approximately the same profile in the US as Blanc has in France), Steve Martin (for the same reason as Williams, only older) and Eddie Murphy (for the same reason as Williams, only black). If *Grosse Fatigue* does turn out to be the hit of Cannes 1994, it will prove beyond doubt that what happens in Cannes may count as far as the world's press is concerned, but it is what happens at the Cap that counts in the business.

It wasn't always thus. Time was, stars and top studio executives stayed at the Carlton or the Majestic, at least within gawping distance of the thousands who make Cannes the world's most popular film festival. But nowadays, most of them – and all the American ones – stay out in a hotel where privacy is so fiercely guarded that as far as their public visibility is concerned, they might as well have stayed in Beverly Hills (which the Cap tries to resemble). Privacy also protects the Hollywood crowd from exposure to anything with which they are not familiar, enabling them – as ever – to set their own agendas and throw parties for each other.

So much, then, for the annual fuss about how many big Hollywood



'Grosse Fatigue' or 'Dead Tired': a hilarious in-joke

movies there are in competition (too few this year, too many last year, if we are to believe *Variety*). The point is, no one out at the Cap gives a toss what is in competition: Cannes is part of their annual schedule, and they would continue to transfer their business operations to the Cap for the second week in May whether Gilles Jacob mounted an all-American competition or showed nothing but black and white movies from Latvia.

What does filter through the security gates from time to time is a concept, hence the appeal of *Grosse Fatigue*, whose plot can be summed up in one of those single sentences beloved of mainstream cultural arbiters. Similarly, the idea of remaking a film appeals because an already-made movie – like a game-show format – is the nearest you can get in the entertainment business to a test-driven product.

It doesn't always work of course: recent remakes in Hollywood have had, at best, mixed results. Last year's *Sommersby* – taken from Daniel Vigne's 1982 *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* – was a major hit for Warner Bros. But box office on *The Vanishing*, *The Assassin* and *Intersection* ranged from disastrous to disappointing.

The real irony in the *Grosse Fatigue* scenario, however, comes with the final suggestion for an actor to take over from Blanc: Woody Allen. The irony is a double one. In the first place, the most recurrent reference point for critics reviewing Blanc's film has been *Stardust Memories*, one of Allen's most underrated films, to which *Grosse Fatigue* makes several nods. But then *Stardust Memories* itself was also a kind of homage: check the reviews and you will find there are few that don't make mention of 8%. Round and round we go, as happy to recycle our films as we are our empty booze bottles.

Amid all this international intertextuality, *'Pulp Fiction'* did at least stand out as sui generis, despite the fact that it borrowed its style from the literary genre of its title. Not that you would have believed Tarantino's film had any merit at all if you read the self-

perpetuating outrage which kept the festival going at least two days longer than usual in the arts pages of certain British broadsheets (actually, the one I have in mind goes tabloid for its arts pages, but you know what I mean).

It is, of course, inevitable that if you put 4,000 journalists in one place, they will create a conflict if none creates itself. But the fascinating aspect of this year's little storm was the revelation that the International Critics' Jury effectively rigged its own vote.

The prize didn't go to *'Three Colours: Red'*, the film the critics' jury apparently considered to be the best in competition, but to second favourite *'Exotica'*, directed by Atom Egoyan. The apparent reason for this was that it was thought that the main jury would give the Palme d'Or to Kieślowski's film, so something else ought to get a look-in when it came to the critics' prize.

Well, pardon me, colleagues, but isn't this just the kind of convoluted strategic thinking of which you have accused main juries ever since film festivals began?

● On to weightier matters. *Crusade*, the Paul Verhoeven medieval epic due to be produced in the second part of this year by Mario Kassar's Carolco – the production company behind the director's two biggest hits, *Total Recall* and *Basic Instinct* – has been indefinitely shelved. Which, in Hollywood-speak, usually means cancelled. Suggestions that the size of the budget – a reported \$110 million – had something to do with the decision have been strenuously denied.

Mr Busy suspects another reason: perhaps someone at Carolco finally got round to taking a look at



Verhoeven's awfulness: 'Flesh and Blood'

Verhoeven's 1985 film *Flesh and Blood*, his final movie before moving to Hollywood. It, too, has a medieval setting (though it doesn't have Arnold Schwarzenegger, as *Crusade* would have done), and the title pretty much sums up what it is about. What it doesn't quite convey, however, is the awfulness of the film in general and of the acting in particular.

But then, come to think of it, *Basic Instinct* isn't exactly a masterclass in the performing arts, is it?

Talking of big-budget movies, the most expensive film in French history started shooting last month (May) in Provence. The producers have not responded to Mr Busy's request for an exact budget, but since the previous most expensive film in French history (*'Germinal'*) cost FF 160 million (around £19 million), that should give you some idea.

Called *'Le Hussard sur le toit'* (*'The Soldier on the Roof'*), it is based on a novel by Jean Giono, the leading practitioner of a sub-genre of the twentieth-century novel – peasant nostalgia – which happily passed most other countries by.

Perhaps more to the point, the film is directed by Jean-Paul Rappeneau and is his first since *'Cyrano de Bergerac'*. If it combines the box-office brio of *'Cyrano'* with the shelf-life of the *'Jean de Florette'*/*'Manon des Sources'* double act – also a tad nostalgic and also set in Provence – then the size of the budget won't be a problem. If it doesn't, then it will.

But before we all start practising our modish cultural shrugs, one thing is worth remembering: at least the French manage to make £19 million epics.

● It is with great sadness that I must tell you that Jeremy Irons will no longer be playing Rochester in Franco Zeffirelli's upcoming film of *Jane Eyre* (S&S June). No reason has been given, and the news obviously came as something of a surprise to the film's producers, who had already taken out quite a lot of expensive advertising to announce their casting coup.

The rest of us will just have to bite our lips and be brave.

Anyone who has been to Berlin recently will have noticed that there is not quite as much cultural money to throw around as there used to be in the days when the western part of the city was a heavily subsidised showcase for capitalism. So far, however, the Berlin Film Festival has survived with only minor adjustments, notably in the class of air travel available to its senior staff. But it recently almost suffered a disastrous knock-on effect from the closure of the arts centre, whose spacious and (as film festivals go) luxurious Budapest-Strasse premises its market has used for the past decade.

A solution has apparently been found, however. The director of the festival's technical department (which provides Berlin with a year-round audiovisual facility) recently leased the entire premises on behalf of the festival. There must be a reason why the film festival didn't lease the premises itself, but I'm blown if I can see it.

● Mid-May was a bad time for connoisseurs of classic character actors. Within days of one another, two of Hollywood's most memorable heavies – Timothy Carey and Royal Dano – died. Carey, aged 65, died on 11 May; Dano, who was 71, on 15 May.

Carey is likely to be best remembered as the madly grinning gunman who shoots the leading horse from the racecourse car park in Kubrick's *The Killing* (1956). Dano was more often a bad guy on a horse – as, for instance, the unpleasant Ten Spot in *The Outlaw Josey Wales*.

Care to guess which country comes top in the video-piracy league (in the sense, that is, of being most prone to piracy)? According to a recent report by the Office of the US Trade Representative, it's Italy, where US companies are estimated to lose \$357 million a year in film piracy.

Mr Berlusconi's backyard notched up quite an achievement: no other country so much as broke the \$100 million barrier. But the runners-up are a little less predictable: in second, third and joint fourth place come Japan (\$97 million), Greece (\$55 million), and Spain and Germany (\$53 million apiece).

China – long seen as the world's biggest breeding ground for video piracy, given its

lack, until last year, of a proper copyright law – is estimated to account for annual losses of only \$50 million (though music piracy in the People's Republic reportedly runs at seven times that figure). But don't underestimate the effects of the Great Leap Sideways into Capitalism: China has the distinction of being South-East Asia's main exporter of the laser discs that are used as masters for pirated video cassettes.

And besides, says the Motion Picture Association of America's Fritz Attaway, the country has made "absolutely no effort" to enforce its new copyright law.

● Bravo's status as the cable channel we all dreamed of was given an added

boost recently by the announcement that it is to add an Independent Film Channel on 1 September. (For uncabled readers, I should explain that its programming is precisely that mix of classic movies and hilarious junk that once made repertory cinemas great – combined with some engagingly elderly TV material.)

The new channel will run 24 hours a day without commercials, and will get films from such leading US specialist distributors as Sony Pictures Classics, Fine Line/New Line, the Samuel Goldwyn Company and October Films. It will also fund a limited number of original student films.

The advisory board is likewise an impressive indication of Bravo's commitment, consisting of Martin Scorsese, Spike Lee, Robert Altman, Joel and Ethan Coen, Martha Coolidge, Ed Saxon and Steven Soderbergh. Mind you, given the commitments of that little lot, I would imagine getting a quorum might prove difficult. And there is as yet no indication when – or if – the service will reach the UK.

Finally, as an unreconstructed rocker, Mr Busy is thrilled to announce a positive avalanche of rock'n'roll movies in various stages of development.

Jeremy Thomas' new deal with French company UGC has resulted in the resurrection of the Led Zeppelin saga 'Hammer of the Gods', which Mike Figgis is slated to direct. Then there is Warner's Jimi Hendrix movie, starring Laurence Fishburne (like in 'Tina: What's Love Got to Do With It'), not to mention a second, rather clumsily titled effort, 'Jimi, an Historical Fantasy Inspired by Jimi Hendrix/Others', whose name presumably has to do with legal considerations not entirely unconnected with the Fishburne film. The indie effort is directed by Daniel Rivera and is in production in Phoenix, Arizona.

Recently announced by Warner Bros and Jerry Weintraub (producer of the 'Karate Kid' and 'Look Who's Talking' series) were plans to make a film about the life of Bob Marley. And Rhino Films, offshoot of an independent US record label of the same name, is to make a movie about one of the rock industry's earliest victims, Frankie Lyman (as in Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers), who died of a drug overdose in the 70s.

Finally, an enterprising LA agency has acquired the film rights to 'Never Fade Away', the unauthorised biography of Nirvana's Kurt Cobain, Cobain's widow Courtney Love having apparently refused all offers for the film rights to the authorised one, which is called 'Come As You Are'.

Those planning thematically linked seasons of films in the year 2000 should probably make a mental note. Those who were around when the Zep were young can, meanwhile, look forward to a combined viewing experience whose sense of overload ought to be roughly equivalent to ten consecutive Ginger Baker drum solos (or perhaps sitting through Oliver Stone's 'The Doors' twice).

CANNES AND SOCHI NOTES

By the seashores

The collective heart of a festival jury can never be fathomed. How, for instance, did Clint Eastwood, Catherine Deneuve, Pupi Avati and their Cannes companions end up giving the Palme d'Or to *Pulp Fiction*, Quentin Tarantino's comic-violent, three-episode crime-picture pastiche?

Everybody else's favourite, Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Three Colours: Red*, was ignored: after prizes for *Blue* in Venice and *White* in Berlin, Cannes would have been the hat-trick, but Clint and Co declined to play the game. The jury at least found a prize for Zhang Yimou's intimate epic *To Live* – previously known as *Lifetimes* – a marvellously ordered and exquisitely acted story of one family's saga during the progressive upheavals of Communism (inevitably the film has been angrily banned in China, and Zhang stayed away from Cannes).

Another strong contender, Nikita Michalkov's *Burnt by the Sun*, starts out as a sun-drenched idyll, a Tchekhovian house-party at a charming dacha. Only the date, 1936, arouses apprehension – justified when things take a sudden nasty turn, wiping away the smiles and the sun. Michalkov's brother Andrei Konchalovsky drew less favour with *Riaba My Chicken*. Revisiting the scenes and characters of his long-banned 1967 film *Asya's Happiness*, Konchalovsky uses a style of broad folk comedy, with echoes of Medvedkin, to analyse a peasant community's obscurantist resentment of socio-economic innovation in the new Russia.

Among films that were never seriously in the running were Alan Rudolph's *Mrs Parker and the Vicious Circle*, a period piece of the "Isn't-that-Will Rogers?" school; Giuseppe Tornatore's celestial conversation piece *Una pura formalità*, with Depardieu and Polanski in a sparky



histrionic duel; Mike Figgis' glossy anachronism *The Browning Version*; Abbas Kiarostami's *Under the Olive Trees*, a gentle, humorous account of a film crew working in a region of Iran still recovering from the earthquake; and the Cambodian Rithy Panh's noble and uncompromising tribute to hard lives, *People of the Rice Fields*. The wide offence caused by Aurelio Grimaldi's brutal, loving, rough-sketched portrait of Roman prostitutes, *Le Puttane*, only testified to its power.

After Cannes, the most intrepid and inexhaustible trekked across Europe to another sea and another very different resort for the first International Film Festival at Sochi (where there has been a smaller, national event for the past four years). Sochi nestles uneasily on the Black Sea, with war-ridden Georgia a few miles down the coast in one direction and the grumbling Crimea on the other side. Once a health resort and playground for the privileged of the USSR, Sochi's monumental Stalinist architecture is now dissolving like salt in the sea air, and few Russian tourists can afford the inflationary prices any more.

The festival made a brave show: the Soviet era at least bequeathed a sense of how to stage an event. The international competition was

familiar, predictable and drowned by Russian voiceover translation. For outsiders, the attraction was at least a sampling of current production, which stands at around 100 features a year. After an initial fascination with Hollywood, audiences are turning back to Russian films, perhaps as part of the new chauvinism that is succeeding the years of humiliation. Comedy and melodrama are most popular, with crime lagging behind; and if the films on view were not very good, they at least appeared to reflect a consistent moral atmosphere – resigned, sceptical, sardonic, accepting crime, corruption, inflation and confusion as facts of daily life.

A whole group of films returns to the mystical fatalism of the decadent, pre-revolutionary novelists and movies, with titles that translate something like *Demons or Paradox*, *I Am Bored My Demon*, or *And He Saw It in a Dream*. Vladimir Basov's *The Abyss*, for instance, relates the dread fate that pursues a young criminal who steals an icon with particular spiritual powers.

Easily the best film in Sochi, *Viva, Castro!*, is, like the films of Konchalovsky and Michalkov, the work of a visiting emigre. Boris Frumin has lived in New York since 1978, when his last Soviet film, *Mistakes of Youth*, was banned. His Russian comeback is an autobiographical reminiscence of boyhood in the early 60s. Sometimes the scenes of school life and loves have the comic caress of Bill Forsyth or early Forman, but Frumin has his own rare gift of discovering the unexpected in every shot and character, and a lifelike way of mingling farce and tragedy. The exiles are returning to Russian movies with substantial gifts.

David Robinson

● The Clampetts serving dinner on their billiard table in "the fancy eatin' room". Bret Maverick waxing philosophic from the wrong side of a gun with something his "old Pappy used to say". Fred Flintstone getting knocked on his bottom by Dino, the hyperactive family dinosaur. What do these televisual snippets from the ancient burial grounds of the medium have in common? As well as being the post-modern remnants of life lived in front of a television set, they are bankably inexpensive, high-concept, self-promotional devices with which to market feature films.

In systems of mass entertainment, as in weapons of mass destruction, human beings have shown a greater capacity for producing delivery systems than for things needing delivery. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the US, where a 15-year-old in a rural county has more opportunities to view drama during the course of a day than the most avid theatre-goer in Elizabethan London might have hoped for in a lifetime. Every new cable channel adds a couple of million empty seats. How to fill them? The relentless search for fuel to keep the culture factories humming constantly requires new sources of raw material. With demand outstripping supply, innovative recycling processes become increasingly attractive.

In its latest forage for salvageables, the entertainment industry has been testing the viability of old TV series as an alloy for new feature films. A trio of such experiments will be demonstrated to British moviegoers this month: *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Maverick* and *The Flintstones*. These movies constitute the most recent wave of a trend that took off with *The Addams Family* in 1991 and has continued with *The Fugitive*, *Dennis the Menace* and *Car 54, Where Are You?* Gilligan's Island, be assured, is in the works.

In fact, what Hollywood is doing here is reviving an old and generally forgotten approach. In the pioneer days of television, when fewer than half of American households had sets, it was common practice for movies to scout for likely properties among the TV dramas that were broadcast live from New

York. The networks unwittingly obliged the studios by commissioning a steady supply of non-serial teleplays – 52-minute, commercially segmented mini-dramas – from such writers as Paddy Chayefsky, Rod Sterling and Gore Vidal, and the Hollywood studios' adaptations were generally impressive. In 1955 Chayefsky's *Marty* dominated the Academy Awards, winning Best Picture, Best Screenplay, Best Director (Delbert Mann) and Best Actor (Ernest Borgnine). Few cared to dwell on the concept's humble birth as *Marty*, a 1953 episode of *The Goodyear Tire Playhouse*. Other noteworthy transformations included Oscar winners *Judgment At Nuremberg* (1961) and *Requiem for a Heavyweight* (1962), as well as the Jerry Lewis vulgar modernist classic *Visitor to a Small Planet* (1961), which was adapted from a 1955 Vidal teleplay.

By the mid-60s, the march of technical progress had completely reversed the flow of adaptation between the two media. As the NBC, CBS and ABC networks achieved coast-to-coast saturation, they blithely cancelled what is now remembered as the golden age of television drama and got down to the serious business of lowest-common-denominator programming. As the brainless shriek of sitcom laughter grew louder, the movies, just by staying where they were, forfeited their position at the base of the mass-culture pyramid. Compared to the despised idiot box, Hollywood cinema now found itself in the unfamiliar business of peddling "quality" entertainment.

During this period sitcom adaptations of feature films became common practice, as if the lineage of the silver screen could confer prestige. In most cases the results came out looking like crass vulgarisations: *Gidget* (ABC, 1965), *Please Don't Eat the Daisies* (NBC, 1965) and *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* (ABC, 1968) are just a few examples. The two most successful in the ratings were both for CBS: *M*A*S*H*, which ran for nine seasons and was easily the pick of the litter, and the maudlin *Alice* (from *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*), which ran for eight seasons.

This film is genteel/TV is vulgar structure gradually disintegrated in the home-video

boom of the 80s. As the showing of reels of celluloid to popcorn-chewing audiences in public theatres became a quaint form of presentation in the mix of broadcast, cable, VCR, laser disc, in-flight projection and the like, so-called feature films gradually found themselves as a long form of their old nemesis, the TV show. Editing was speeded up to video-friendly rhythms. Successes were routinely extended into tube-like sequels and prequels. The 30-year paradigm of film and television as aesthetically distinct media became obsolete: in practice, they were revealed as merely two formats for distribution of a single product. A preference for celluloid over videotape became something akin to a preference for reading the hardbound edition of a book rather than the paperback.

Cineastes, of course, find themselves alternately remonstrating against the barbarian tide or entering into trance-like states of denial. Television had always been the enemy – and a fine whipping boy at that. As long as the 'two separate media' illusion was maintained, the Edisonites did not have to kowtow to applause signs and severely depleted attention spans. Quite the contrary: in the old days, American commercial cinema shamelessly paraded its new-found pedigree by mocking the manners of the upstart.

In *A Face in the Crowd* (1957), Elia Kazan interrupts his plodding Group Theatre naturalism to offer a hysterical parody of commercial television camera styles. But the movie's message is not so light-hearted: television poses a serious threat to American democracy and all that thinking liberals hold dear. In his script for *Network* (1976), an embittered Paddy Chayefsky lambasts the greedy conniving bastards who had betrayed television's (and his own) artistic potential. In *The China Syndrome* (1978) we are warned that even the nightly local newscast is fraught with lies. So how did the movies slide from guarding the public's interest against the brute of television to churning out homages to the likes of *The Beverly Hillbillies*?

When practice affords such little comfort, it is perhaps better to seek refuge in theory. No ►

Hollywood and American television have fed off each other since the 50s. Why don't this latest batch of TV-derived movies match up to the quality of the originals? By David Marc

SIBLING RIVALRY



Only rubble: John Goodman as Fred Flintstone in the very unanimated 'The Flintstones', opposite



◀ genre is inherently worthless, no matter how poorly its possibilities have been realised. If movies based on old television shows should prove successful at the box office (and on cable, in broadcast and as cassette, laser disc, CD-ROM, videogame, and so on), this type of film is likely eventually to yield a genre's usual share of masterpieces and geniuses (check *Cahiers* 3001). Suffice it to say that with *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *The Flintstones* and *Maverick* we have not yet reached that stage. Instead, what you get is no more than the kind of thing that is often done – and done better – by a bunch of strangers reminiscing in a pub about their childhood viewing habits. Though all three relentlessly attempt to poke the viewer in the ribs over bits and pieces of trivia and nostalgia, not one of them is loving enough to qualify as an appreciation, witty enough to make for good satire or even smart enough to tell you something you didn't already know about the series or about television in general.

It is said that the hook to watching reruns of old television series is not the plotting of the individual episodes or the long-term character development made possible by scores of hours of air time. Instead, the attraction lies in the programme's quality as a place to enter another universe, a location once visited often and perhaps enjoyable to visit again. If this is true, then maybe it is not surprising that none of these films has a discernible story to tell. Indeed, they are offered as pure settings inhabited by pure *gestalts*. The film-maker provides the viewer with a vehicle to the old show's cosmological space: once there, tourists may do as they please. The superimposition of a feature-film plot structure seems like a clumsy afterthought: a half-hearted hedge against the chance that these movies might seem less like the originals if they had no plot at all. Perhaps Hollywood is developing its first non-narrative, or at least a-narrative, genre. What next: *Sgt. Bilko* directed by Stan Brakhage?

Boomtime hedonism

But though they have no on-screen tales to sell, these films do possess a commodity that is far more prized in the contemporary market: built-in public familiarity, or what television executives call the "F-score". The property comes fully equipped with a track record – translatable into charts, graphs and vinyl-bound reports that 'prove' a proposed movie's market value – which is an invaluable asset for producers seeking finance and much more convincing than the fact that you find a comedy

funny or a mystery gripping. Available figures include the profitability of the series in the syndicated rerun market; the demographic character of its viewership; product licensing reports; public perception of the property's position on the family viewing/adult entertainment grid and plenty more.

The Beverly Hillbillies, the most popular sitcom on American television during the 60s, comes with reams of such information. Paul Henning, the series' creator-producer, dominated prime-time for most of the decade with his hit show and its two popular spin-offs, *Petticoat Junction* and *Green Acres*. During the *Hillbillies*' production run on CBS (1962-71) it finished number one in the national Neilsens twice and was consistently top rated until the early 70s. According to a study published by *TV Guide* in 1982, nine weekly episodes of *The Beverly Hillbillies* ranked among the 50 most watched programmes in the history of television, drawing ratings comparable to those of Super Bowls.

The premise of the series is succinctly stated in the song Henning wrote to accompany the opening credits: "Come and listen to my story 'bout a man named Jed, / A poor mountaineer, barely kept his family fed, / Then one day he was shootin' at some food, / When up through the ground come a' bubbling crude, / Oil that is: black gold, Texas tea."

In this recapitulation of an epic American legend, Henning offers the story of a rugged individual who begins life behind a plough and ends up master of a great estate. But the Puritan basis of the myth has been updated for the boomtime hedonism of the 60s: hard work, once essential, has been deleted. No Horatio Alger, Jed Clampett simply pulls the trigger of his gun, and as if spinning the Wheel of Fortune, his bullet lands on \$25 million worth of buried fossil fuel. Henning further plays with tradition by opening each episode with a visual allusion to no less tragic a tale than John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, via the John Ford movie. As with the Joads, we see the Clampetts loading up their quaint belongings for the epic trek West. Just like Grandpa Joad, Granny must be forcibly removed from the house in her rocking chair and tied to the back of the flatbed truck. But the image that follows deviates sharply from the Depression era parable: the next shot is the Clampett truck rolling down the tree-lined streets of Beverly Hills on its way to the family's 32-room California mansion.

Over the course of the series' nine-year run, five plot lines developed that account for virtually all of the 216 half-hour episodes: 1. Sophis-

ticated city folks try to hustle the Clampetts out of their money, but fail because they outsmart themselves. 2. Elly May, Jed's daughter, has reached majority without a husband, and urban suitors – corrupt, effete and/or mercenary – come courting to no avail. 3. Jethro, Jed's nephew and an utter moron, tests the waters of various careers, including brain surgeon and "double-nought" spy. 4. Jed, a widower, meets a woman. 5. Granny, the family matriarch, battles for the birthright of her folk heritage against the forces of post-industrial culture.

It is the last of these that provides many of the funniest moments of the 108-hour text. Granny's proven folk talents as small-game chef, organic healer, moonshiner, matchmaker, meteorologist and much more turn her into a lunatic in Beverly Hills, where the status of an individual is measured by the quantity of their leisure time rather than by the quality of their work. For example, Granny makes her own lye soap in an open kettle down by the "cee-ment pond". Her neighbours do not envy or respect her for this; they just call the police.

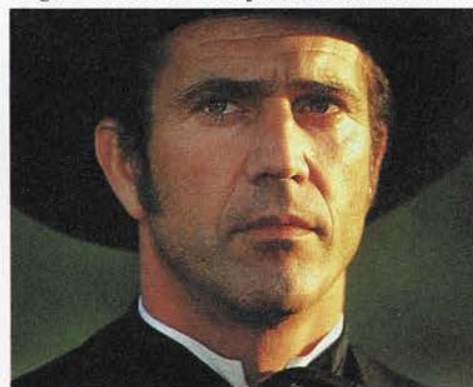
Manic feistiness

While director Penelope Spheeris attempts to cover the first four of these narrative development lines in her 93-minute film, Granny is almost completely missing. Moreover Spheeris shows little of the genius for banal detail that made her exploration of public-access cable in *Wayne's World* so rich. The little we do see of Granny finds Cloris Leachman dull as paint. Completely lacking the manic feistiness which Irene Ryan gave the television character, Leachman sleepwalks through, stealing not even a modicum of viewer attention, let alone a scene.

A stronger effort, but in some ways even more disappointing, is Lily Tomlin's recreation of Jane Hathaway, the hyperliterate secretary of the Clampetts' greedy banker Milburn Drysdale. Nancy Kulp, who played the role (and one rather like it in an earlier Henning sitcom) made this merciless caricature of a polysyllabic-but-plain Vassar graduate wandering through a world of Angelino airheads and country bumpkins into an object of schoolyard hysteria for a generation of American children. Tomlin becomes caught between a loyal imitation of the original and a script that utterly reinterprets the role. Most of Mrs Hathaway's humour in the sitcom is derived from her frustration and female-eunuch impotence; in the movie, she turns out to be the hero who saves the day.

The Flintstones isn't much kinder, either to its origins or its audience. John Goodman, who is

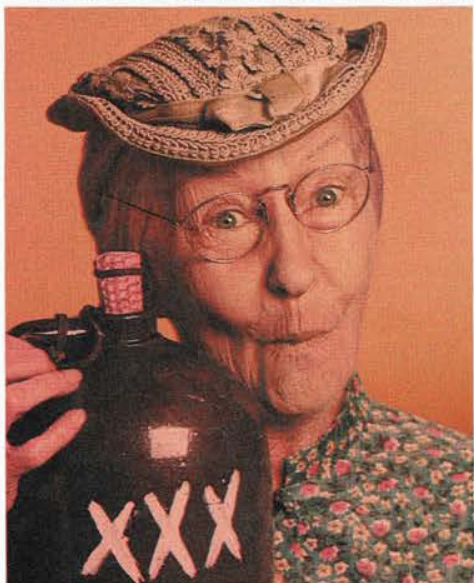
Grey-hatted heroes: James Garner in the original 'Maverick', right, and Mel Gibson in the film version, far right



making a career from being the only good thing in a boring movie, tries very hard to persevere with a miserable, disjointed script that can do little else but repeatedly remind its audience of how wonderful all those old *Flintstones* animated sight gags were and how cool it is to see them unanimated – very unanimated. Every time someone starts a car, we get a close-up of revving feet. Every time Wilma and Betty laugh, they do their famous duet laugh. Fred must say “Yabba dabba doo” – well, a lot. Goodman does get some help from Kyle MacLachlan, who somehow manages to look as though he’s being directed by David Lynch in the midst of a kiddie movie. MacLachlan plays a thoroughly evil character, the kind that would never appear in *The Flintstones*, *The Jetsons*, *Yogi Bear* or any other Hanna-Barbera cartoon. But loyalty to the model is hardly an issue as this still-life plods on. Rick Moranis and Rosie O’Donnell seem only slightly embarrassed as they drift through assignments as Barney and Betty. The fact that Elizabeth Taylor appears at all completely overshadows any qualities that might be discerned from her performance.

By some accounts as many as 32 writers were used by director Brian Levant. A patient viewer might just be able to pick out the work of each of them. In the age of Spielberg, bad dialogue is often compensated for by special effects; ten-year-olds may well be floored by the technical dazzle of a pig puppet acting like a garbage disposal, a bird puppet mimicking an effeminate man and a Mastodon puppet giving Fred a shower with his trunk.

A shallow interpretation that has followed



The Flintstones since its debut on ABC in 1960 compares it with *The Honeymooners*, probably because both Fred and Jackie Gleason’s Ralph Kramden are explicitly blue-collar characters, even rarer then than now in American sitcoms. But a comparison of the Kramdens’ barebones apartment – no radio, no television, not even a telephone – with the *Flintstones’* Levittown consumer utopia quickly gives lie to the idea. Unfortunately, Levant pushes the movie precisely in this fruitless direction. “I am the KING of MY castle,” Fred tells Wilma in a line and style lifted directly from Gleason. Goodman’s imitation is the film’s best entertainment, but the *Honeymooners* parallel works against the most powerful metaphor to be found in a Hanna-Barbera cartoon: all human experience – from caveman past to space-age future – seen as life in an affluent American suburb.

Thickening plots

Maverick, directed by Richard Donner, is a different kind of project. First, the show belongs to a dormant genre, the TV Western, which maintains only a limited following. Second, though the series was popular enough to crack the top ten one season, it was not a long-running mega-hit, nor did it ever achieve the status of an ‘evergreen’ – a series that always makes money by syndication of its reruns. It is this last feat, thoroughly accomplished by both *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *The Flintstones*, that turns a mere TV show into a cultural institution.

Premiering on ABC in 1957, *Maverick* had a refreshingly laid-back style in a TV action environment still dominated by bullet-headed McCarthy era law-and-order types. Roy Huggins, the show’s creator-producer, introduced an echo of the Hammett-Chandler tradition by focusing the series on a poker-playing rogue rather than on the sheriffs, marshalls, gunfighters or vigilantes who otherwise dominated the format. *Maverick*’s primary motivation, Huggins wrote in a memo to his writing staff, had to be “easy money” rather than justice. Like Sam Spade, Bret Maverick is a hero by default, not intention.

Years later, Huggins revealed the autobiographical source of his career-long insistence on grey-hatted heroes to have been his own unheroic experience as a friendly witness for the House Un-American Activities Committee. Huggins told Victor Navasky that he had in fact “named names”, citing a failure of nerve which he would regret for the rest of his life. Accordingly, his protagonists, from *Maverick* to Dr Richard Kimble of *The Fugitive* to Jim Rockford of

The Rockford Files, do not seek the limelight, but typically find themselves pushed into dilemmas that force them to take action, even though they’d rather be at home watching television. But these characters succeed in doing the right thing anyway, something the man who imagined them had been unable to do.

In the movie, Mel Gibson plays the title character created by James Garner for television, and, in the kind of ineffectual self-reflexive flourish that characterises all three films, James Garner plays the father of the character he created some 40 years earlier. In a reasonable updating, Jodie Foster is added as a professional and romantic foil to Gibson. Interestingly, Huggins had tried a similar female character during the 1958-59 season, but dropped her the following year. The Gibson-Foster-Garner combination makes for some snappy repartee and things might have worked out if only somebody on the set had been paying attention to continuity.

Maverick contains a plot that does nothing but thicken until it cannot function as a plot any more. The movie keeps promising some kind of spectacular dénouement, but delivers nothing but more promises. Whenever the disarray tests the limits of audience attention too severely, a scene with a shirtless Gibson or provocatively dressed Foster, or both, is added as a holding action before returning to the mystery of the sclerotic narrative. In the last scene, as it is becoming apparent that nothing is going to be resolved in any kind of satisfying way, Gibson is placed in a public baths, wet and wearing nothing but a towel. Weak dramaturgy? Flaccid softcore pornography? Demographic targeting? You’ve paid your money, take your pick.

The corporate restructuring of the culture industry over the last 15 years means that today each giant communications holding company owns a diverse collection of broadcast transmitters, satellite transponders, movie studios, cable franchises, recording libraries and most even keep a publishing house or two. Such mergers have reduced the market to so few distributors as to make competition for an audience minimal. It would be hard for anyone to get through a day in America without consuming at least one cultural product each from Time-Warner, General Electric and Ted Turner. It is the search for raw materials that has become desperate. The cultural takeover of movies by television is but one result.

‘The Beverly Hillbillies’ and *‘Maverick’* open on 15 July and *‘The Flintstones’* on 22 July

Pale shadows: Irene Ryan as Granny in *‘The Beverly Hillbillies’*, top left, and the family in the film version, left

In 'Alphaville', with its city where weeping is outlawed, Godard produced his most dystopian vision of Paris. Why was Paris so central to Godard and the 'nouvelle vague'? By Chris Darke

IT ALL HAPPENED IN PARIS



● *Alphaville* opens with a screenful of flashing light; a strident, ominous music underpins its pulse. A voice, at the same time gratingly electronic and glottally human, declares: "There are times when reality becomes too complex for oral communication. But legend gives it a form by which it pervades the whole world."

Apart from *A bout de souffle*, *Alphaville* is probably the most complete of Godard's genre pieces. Its science-fiction tone is held in satisfyingly parodic balance by the pulp-fiction narrative so beloved of the *nouvelle vague*. But the "too complex reality" to which the film gives "legendary" (i.e., generic) form is a precise one. It concerns post-war French modernisation and urban expansion – a reality peopled by technocrats and consumers and, for the *nouvelle vague* at least, all taking place in Paris.

Alphaville (1965) is the story of special agent Lemmy Caution, played by American actor and naturalised noir icon Eddie Constantine, who has voyaged (in his white Ford Galaxy) across time and space to Alphaville, the capital city of a distant planet. His mission: to bring back the scientist Professor Von Braun. The Professor, however, has since become king of the city by creating Alpha 60, the computer that controls Alphaville along harsh technocratic lines: weeping is outlawed and poetry goes unrecognised, words such as conscience and love have been erased from the lexicon. Add to this Anna Karina as Natacha von Braun, daughter of the Professor and Programmer (Second Class) of Alpha 60, a number tattooed on her neck, who is loved by Lemmy; Constantine's whisky-drinking, poetry-spouting, outrageously overdetermined hard man of a special agent whose fight sequences, as Wim Wenders noted in his essay on the actor, "are like dance sequences in a bad musical"; and Raoul Coutard's cinematography, the luminous opposition of its Expressionist black and white matching the film's abstract absolutes of good and evil, love and death, conscience and technology, poetry and science. Plus, of course, Paris.

Alphaville is Paris, 1965. Or rather, Paris 1965 is *Alphaville*, a modernist nightmare of post-Bauhaus functionalism where the curtain-walled skyscraper becomes the simultaneous symbol of progress and apocalypse. With *Alphaville*, the *nouvelle vague* aesthetic of shooting in the streets reaches an apotheosis. There is no question here of ethnographic realism in the style of Jean Rouch's *Chronique d'un été* (1961) or Chris Marker's *Le joli mai* (1963), nor of Italian-style realism. *Alphaville*'s is a short-circuited realism applied to the least likely of genres – science fiction – that serves to make strange a real already so strange that it positively demands the strategy.

Alphaville is something of a curio in the catalogue of Godard's city films. Of the 15 features he made between 1959 and 1967, only three – *Le Petit Soldat* (1960), *Le Mépris* (1963) and *Pierrot le fou* (1965) – are shot outside Paris. Yet despite the familiar location, *Alphaville* looks different. With its flashing neon arrows and the tyrannical right angles and aggressive curves of its modern architecture, it comes closer to Jacques Tati than to the films of the other *nouvelle vague*

directors, not to mention the more representative films set in what we might call Godardville.

Along with *Metropolis*, *Blade Runner* and *Akira*, *Alphaville* is one of the definitive works in the cinema of dystopian cities. Each film proposes its vision of a dehumanised society as the corollary to technological progress within the style of its period: Lang's epic-scale 20s Expressionism supplies a female robot with a supermodel figure and a vision of Berlin as a machine-age tyranny of power and control; Scott's film gives cyberpunk its founding retromediaevalist look; Otomo's manga-influenced hyperbole of the viscerally brutal and peachily sentimental creates a contemporary animated vision of the apocalyptic city – neo-Tokyo. As science fiction, each of the others dramatises the question "What would it be like if...?", each proposes a future latent in the present. *Alphaville*, by contrast, says "Forget 'what if...?'. Look around you! 'If' has already taken place!"

It may seem curious to associate the *nouvelle vague* with a dystopian vision of Paris. After all, the early films render the city as a (shot from the) hip 50s *carte postale*. From the twin manifestos of *Les quatre cents coups* (1959) and *A bout de souffle* (1959) to the last-gasp revivalism of *Paris vu par...* (1964), the *nouvelle vague* redefined the look of Paris. But it is Godard's films that focus most consistently on the city in the late 50s and 60s, to the extent that Tony Rayns can suggest they are "so much of their particular time that they'll need explanatory footnotes before long." Here are some footnotes.

Modernist exoticism

Suggesting that a film is "of its time" can be a politely indirect way of saying that it looks dated, and *Alphaville* does not escape the implication. In the same way as Ray Harryhausen's monsters and Japanese Godzilla movies now epitomise 60s SFX-kitsch rather than high-tech screen terror, so Godard's vision of futuristic technology might appear more steam-driven than streamlined. But such an observation is wide of the mark. These films were precisely, insistently, almost fetishistically of their time, and this holds as true for the films of other new-wavers as it does for Godard.

Part of the modernity of the *nouvelle vague* can be attributed to the use of new lightweight Eclair cameras and Nagra sound-recording technology to bypass the convention of studio-based shooting associated with the despised *cinéma de qualité*. This allowed the new filmmakers to take to the streets and boulevards, *quartiers* and apartments of the real city, all the better to mythologise its historic centre. Georges Sadoul, writing on Louis Malle's *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* (1957), asked, "How many cinematic poets has Paris had? One would be forgiven for thinking that it was impossible to renew this theme." For Sadoul, Malle already possessed the eye for detail, for the life of modern objects, that was to characterise the "young French cinema": "Wall-to-wall carpeting, rubber-coated castors, a cast-iron, diamond-shaped trapdoor, a lighter, a parachutist's knife, an empty blue packet of Gitanes... No need for dialogue here. All these objects speak." Enhanced by the swooning

melancholy of a Miles Davis score, by Jeanne Moreau's city-sphinx persona and by the black and white cinematography of Henri Decaë (who also photographed *Les quatre cents coups*), the objects in Malle's film anticipated the *nouvelle vague* by a year and spoke perhaps the first words in a dialogue with the grandest modern object of them all: Paris itself.

This dialogue between the cinema and the city was nowhere more insistently developed than in Godard's films of the 60s. In her key essay 'Godard', Susan Sontag recognised the "casually encyclopedic" nature of his work; in the January 1967 issue of *Cahiers du cinéma*, the young Bernardo Bertolucci wrote of Godard's "vulgarity", adding that for him this was a positive quality: "I call 'vulgarity' his capacity and his ability to live day-to-day, close to things, to live in the world as does a journalist, always



Pulp fiction: Eddie Constantine, special agent of the future, in search of the scientist of Alphaville, opposite and above

aware of the right time to arrive on the scene." But what for some was a "journalistic" sensitivity to the moment was for others simply superficiality and love of novelty. Writing about *Alphaville* in the leftist cultural journal *Les Temps modernes* in 1965, Pierre Samson found fault with Godard's archetypically *nouvelle vague* shooting style: "He shoots without long preparation, and improvises against a very thin canvas which permits him to stay in the current of fashionable ideas, to be at one with the snobberies and curiosities of the moment." When it came to *Alphaville*'s vision of Paris as a futuristic metropolis, Samson was equally scathing: "Godard only chooses the most exterior details, he contents himself with naming things at the expense of knowing how to show them... He inhabits the level of a sort of exoticism of automation and modernism."

The characterisation was to stick – Godard the modernist exotic, fascinated by the surfaces, sounds and shapes of modern Parisian life but not by its substance. It was a barely veiled accusation of profligacy of style and theme, of bad taste, of formlessness and lack of aesthetic harmony – forgetting that in Godard's case the old rules simply don't apply and never did. The issue of "exoticism" is at the ambiguous heart of the modernist cinema's depictions of the modern city.

The blurring of Paris

In a collection of essays that examines images of post-war European cities, French historian Pierre Sorlin proposes that by the late 50s Italian cinema had arrived at "a blurred image of cities". Sorlin arrives at the metaphor of blur- ▶

◀ ring by way of two assumptions: first that “a change occurred in the socially constituted images when film-makers ceased to view cities as potential works of art”, and second that this change was related to transformations in the post-war urban topologies that resulted in “a crisis in the representation of towns”. In the case of Paris, it is in the cinematic representation of the relationship between the historic centre and its peripheries, the new suburbs, that this loss of focus becomes explicit.

The “blurring” of Paris in the cinema of the *nouvelle vague* is a chronicle of the incursions into the city centre of modernist architecture and of the cultural ascendancy of Le Corbusier and the International Style. As a result, the characters lose their bearings – and worse their love of the city – because, as in Jean Rouch’s ‘Gard du nord’ episode in *Paris vu par...*, the *grands projets* of the 60s appear to be steadily obscuring and unfocusing Haussmann’s rationally planned centre. It is just such a fear that informs *Alphaville*’s image of an architecturally brutalist future world in the heart of the city. In its despair over 60s urbanisation, *Alphaville* was part of a wider concern about the perceived dehumanising effects of mass-scale housing and the contemporary renovation of the city. Governmental responses to the French post-war housing shortage – particularly acute in Paris, the 1962 census showing that one flat in four was overcrowded and that 60 per cent of all French housing stock dated from before 1914 – had been slow. State intervention in 1959 led to suburban areas being designated for immediate or future development, but in some cases these became the focus of “national disgust” at the most pernicious of the mass-scale HLM (*habitations à loyer modéré* or low-rent housing) schemes, dubbed in *Alphaville* “hôpital de la longue maladie”.

The most notorious example was the Sarcelles housing estate, which lent its name to a phenomenon named *la sarcellite*. This blanket term for the malign effects of living in an HLM is the subject of Godard’s *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d’elle* (1966), the “elle” of the title being both Paris herself and the young Sarcelles housewife (Marina Vlady) who takes to casual prostitution in order to make ends meet. The processes of objectification crucial to consumer society are shown at their most extreme in a scenario wherein a young woman must sell herself as an object in order to afford other objects. The prostitute – a stock figure of Parisian mythology from Baudelaire and Impressionist painting onwards – returns as false consciousness made flesh. The film ends with a series of consumer items – boxes of washing powder, transistor radios and so on – arranged in a rectilinear replication of the layout of Sarcelles. The allure of novelty attributed to such objects in Malle’s film is stripped away; Godard’s objects offer the economic relations behind the suburban new towns as metonymic of consumer society itself. Vlady’s Juliette Janson is not physically integrated in the city where she lives, but in a circuit of economic demands and desires that Sarcelles represents.

And yet the critique is ambiguous – as it is in Jacques Tati’s films on the same subject,

“Exoticism” is at the ambiguous heart of the modernist cinema’s depictions of the modern city



Love in a cold climate: Eddie Constantine and Anna Karina

Mon oncle (1958) and *Playtime* (1967). Within Tati’s satires on modernist architecture, consumerism and urbanisation, the ancestral city disappears. In *Playtime* it becomes a shadow image – something glimpsed only as a reflection in the glass curtain walls of the city set nicknamed “Tativille” that the director had constructed on the outskirts of Paris and which Serge Daney has called “La Défense before La Défense existed”. Here the historic city is not simply “blurred”, but has vanished altogether. In *Mon oncle*, shot in and around the new town of Créteil, there is still some semblance of community to be nostalgic about. But this is separated from the new town by a *terrain vague* that, by the end of the film, is ominously under development. The ambivalence present in both directors’ work comes from their manipulation of the harsh geometry of the new architectural styles to formal ends – their “modernist exoticism”. The ambiguous fascination with the aesthetic surface of post-war urban modernity in *Deux ou trois choses* was eloquently identified by Eric Rohmer: “In the suburbs Godard filmed the ugliest, most frightful things and succeeded in making them come alive, in making them beautiful... With a panoramic shot of an HLM at Sarcelles one can make a sublime image and Godard did it.”

Godardville

By the end of the 60s Godard had quit Paris, moving to the suburbs for *Deux ou trois choses*, taking the *route nationale* out of the city in the agonising traffic jam that opens *Weekend* (a single-take, mobile-camera shot of clotted immobility, the highway as haemorrhage), and retreating to an unlit, undecorated television studio for *Le Gai Savoir* (1968). The city of tourist-friendly landmarks and easy *parisianismes* that the *nouvelle vague* had reinvigorated, if not entirely reinvented, was being systematically replaced from the early years of the decade by the banal spaces of modernity – spaces conducive to lingering, to urban *temps morts* – and by what Gilles Deleuze calls the “any spaces whatever” that characterise the cinema of Godard and Resnais, Varda and Marker,

Rossellini and Antonioni. In his recent book *Cinema and Modernity*, John Orr acknowledges Deleuze’s recognition that the depiction of this kind of urban landscape began with Italian post-war cinema: “In NeoRealism the new open spaces of Europe’s ruined cities opened up the cinematic spaces of the exterior location which did not have to define itself as a familiar locale.”

Godard created other masterpieces of Parisian cinema alongside *Alphaville*, of course. Of these, *Une femme mariée*, made in 1964 with Macha Méril in the lead role, forms the second panel in a triptych about women in the city, between *Vivre sa vie* (1962) and *Deux ou trois choses*. Separated from *Alphaville* not so much by its concerns – the automation of personal life, dehumanisation, alienation – as by its tone, *Une femme mariée* is a quasi-sociological exploration of a ‘typical’ young Parisian couple of the 60s. Pierre, true to the technocratic impetus of the time, is an engineer; Charlotte is a housewife with a young son and a lover. Together they live in a newly built apartment block packed with the latest consumer durables. Emotionally, Charlotte is divided between her husband and her lover, a fragmentation intensified by that which she undergoes among the multitude of consumer images of women within which the film places her.

The Paris of *Une femme mariée* is “anonymously modern”, its “any spaces whatever” those of Orly airport and the department store Printemps-Nation, where Charlotte – the post-Baudelairean *flâneuse* (and the only female character in the triptych not to play the Godardian Holy Whore) – finds herself both reflected in and refracted by the images of feminine perfection and inducements to consumerism that multiply around her. Perhaps *Alphaville* gets its re-release in the knowledge that it is ‘low-risk’ Godard and in the hope that its collage of genres will transcend the specifics of time and place to which it is a response. As for Godard’s “modernist exoticism”, clearly it became too unbearable a contradiction for the director simultaneously to aestheticise and condemn. So the ambiguous fascination with the modern city populated by the objects and alienated characters of consumer society devolved first into the anguished auto-criticism of *Deux ou trois choses*, then into the savage disavowal of *Weekend*, and, after May ‘68, into the militant agit-prop and chic Maoism of “le groupe Dziga Vertov”.

Towards the end of *Alphaville*, just before being shot dead, Professor Von Braun, the man of the future, says to Lemmy Caution, the man of the past: “Look at yourself. Men of your type will soon be extinct. You’ll become something worse than death. You’ll become a legend.” The words apply with uncanny accuracy to Godard himself. But in the continuing absence on our screens of recent Godard – no *Nouvelle Vague* with Delon, nor *Hélas pour moi* with Depardieu – there remain the city films, a highly personal series of Pop Art news bulletins from 60s Paris. For “of their time”, read “dated”, “extinct”. Read glorious.

BFI Distribution has released a new print of ‘*Alphaville*’, which opens at the ICA on 10 June

What memory may choose to remember is a central mystery in Chris Marker's films. By Chris Petit

INSANE MEMORY

● In Chris Marker's 1962 film *La Jetée*, his only work of fiction to date, a man travels back through time (to Orly airport in Paris) in an effort to save the planet's last survivors from extinction. From this familiar (even banal) plot emerges a film that remains unforgettable for its central paradox: this most cinematic of films is composed entirely from stills (a denial of the moving image), with the brief exception of a shot of a woman on a bed, where the only sign that the image is not fixed is the flicker of her eye. In this tiny movement, both intimate and universal (with its echo of Bresson's note on "the ejaculatory force of the eye"), it is possible to review the birth of cinema, a fractional moment of genius on Marker's part without which his film would be quite dead.

The mo(ve)ment comes to mind watching Marker's documentary of two decades later, *Sans soleil*, when he pauses to dwell on the significance of the close-up of the human eye in the opening credits of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, with its graphic vortex spinning out of the pool of an eye. This spiral of dizziness prompts Marker, in a typical leap of imagination, to conclude that "vertigo of space in reality stands for the vertigo of time", a statement that draws together his own themes of space and time. Memory, his other abiding obsession, is the bridge between them, and is shown by experience to be unreliable, subject to alteration, revision and distortion. Memory also makes a nonsense of the distinction between fact and fiction, and recognition of this allows Marker to operate in the cusp between the two, transforming a documentary like *The Last Bolshevik* (1993), which resurrects the lost Russian film-maker Medvedkin, into as much a work of imagination as *La Jetée* or *Vertigo*.

Promiscuous eye

At the time of making *Sans soleil*, Marker tells us, he had seen Hitchcock's film 29 times, and he adds that it is the only film yet made capable of portraying "impossible memory, insane memory". Besides being an exemplary piece of criticism, Marker's meditation on *Vertigo* serves to remind us of his own debt to Hitchcock's film, first acknowledged in *La Jetée* with its reference to the scene where Kim Novak points to the concentric rings that mark the age of an ancient sequoia tree and contemplates her own timespan ("Here I was born and here I died"). What memory chooses to remember is a central mystery in Marker's work. If his cinema has a precedential moment, then it is in *Citizen Kane*, when an old man recalls the memory of a lifetime – a young woman glimpsed unaware on a ferry. Such moments (of no apparent significance when they occur) are described by Marker as being among those memories whose only function is to leave behind nothing but memories. Elsewhere he observes that it is impossible to live with memory without falsifying it. (Was the ferry referred to by the old man the Staten Island ferry, or am I making that up?)

In *Sans soleil*, Marker identifies the co-existence

of different concepts of time as the great question of the century, a belief endorsed by his compatriot Paul Virilio (in many ways his philosophical equivalent) when he wrote that "we've passed from the extended time of centuries and from the chronology of history to a time that will continue to grow ever more intensive; we live in a world of intensely tiny units of time. The real world and our image of the world no longer coincide." Part of the intention of Marker's cinema is to illustrate Virilio's theory and to show how it can also be applied retrospectively. He quotes George Steiner at the start of *The Last Bolshevik*: "It is not the literal past that rules us: it is images of the past."

Marker's journey as a film-maker imitates that of his protagonist in *La Jetée*, to the extent that one can see *Sans soleil* – on the face of it a documentary report from different countries – as a re-make of the fiction film with Marker himself cast in the role of alien visionary. In spite of his 'presence' in the film, however, Marker is physically absent (there is a rumour that he refuses to let himself be photographed). The two films connect as explorations of cinematic point of view: both are lateral re-makes of *Vertigo*, minus Hollywood. But where *La Jetée* haunts the perimeter world of contemporary Paris, which through the selectivity of Marker's eye becomes an imaginative landscape (a feat similar to that of Godard in *Alphaville* three years later), *Sans soleil* turns the department stores of modern Tokyo into similarly alien terrain, a twilight, subterranean world of dreams whose images may really be those of dream fragments or part "of a gigantic collective dream of which the entire city may be a projection". Either way, Marker's aim is to make the viewer see afresh and doubt the reality of what is seen.

Marker's territory is far-reaching, continental, even global. Huge distances are covered by a single cut. He has the controlled, promiscuous eye of a modern *flâneur*, lovingly searching out the extraordinary moment or detail in the otherwise mundane. At the start of *Sans soleil*, he (or rather the narrator he is impersonating, his thoughts recorded in letters read out by an unknown woman) announces that now only banality still interests him and "I tracked it with the relentlessness of a bounty-hunter." But what banality: the intense personality of a woman's hands resting on the rail of a ferry; the hypnotic movement of waves breaking on a remote shore; the briefest of glances into the heart of his lens.

Marker is one of the more intrepid explorers of the new continent of cinema, a pioneer in the tradition of Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, showing how far it is possible to travel alone. He has been called "our unknown cosmonaut" (by Jean Quevel) and is a child of Jules Verne and the Broth-

ers Lumière and a fellow-traveller of J. G. Ballard. His work is truly futuristic. The now familiar world of video surveillance – random, strategic, weirdly undramatic – with its alien camera set-ups and the sense of being monitored by invisible forces has a notable precedent in *La Jetée*, which is entirely prophetic of this new technology (if aliens monitor our progress then their reports would perhaps look like a combination of these pictures and Marker's films). Part of Marker's point was to draw attention to the process of recording, in contrast to the technology of mainstream cinema, which doesn't (in the mainstream cameras move smoothly, sound is carefully filtered, light balanced to give an impression of continuity). Godard once remarked that hair and make-up are one of the great battlegrounds of cinema. Marker's own campaign appears to be against continuity.

Time's labyrinth

Few film-makers are as literate and literary. Borges is an obvious reference, with his similar obsession with time's labyrinth, scholarly games and playful erudition. Marker in one sense 'writes' his films as though they are this century's equivalent to the letter, but beyond that he belongs with a handful of directors who have made cinema their own. Near the end of *Sans soleil* he says he remembers the month of January he spent in Tokyo ("January light on a station stairway"), then qualifies it with a modern equivalent of the Cartesian proof: I film therefore I am. "Rather I remember the images I filmed. They have substituted themselves for my memory. They are my memory. I wonder how people remember things who don't film."

As well as looking ahead, Marker has stayed faithful to the lessons of early cinema ("Preserving the past is a moral duty," he notes in *The Last Bolshevik*). As a recorder of faces, he is the successor to the Brothers Lumière, while his continuation of the work of Vertov and Medvedkin suggests that a future cinema might be individual rather than industrial, actively political rather than merely ideological. Vertov argued that films should show life as it is, "the truth of life". It's a principle Marker has followed, making him an exemplary chronicler.

Marker's quest for the true image is an ongoing task, since such images are not often found and when they are they often come by surprise. An image in *Sans soleil*, of three children walking along a road in Iceland, described as one of happiness, is set apart from the rest by a black leader, so "If we don't 'see' happiness, at least we'll see black." Just as *La Jetée* anticipated the moment of extinction, so Marker's films in their search for life are haunted by death (black), though not in the conventional, mechanical sense of Hollywood: cinema by its very process is composed of phantoms, inhabiting what Marker calls the kingdom of shadows (recalling the Lumières' definition of their work as the movement of shadows). Thus it is entirely in keeping that Marker's film to Medvedkin is made after the latter's death and that it takes the form of six letters to a dead man. (It is part of Marker's charm that these letters appear to have been written in the full expectation of being received by Medvedkin, though there is nothing conventionally religious about Marker.) Absence lies at the heart of his work, which, more than most, stands between past and future – outside of time maybe.

'The Last Bolshevik' is available from Academy Video



A memory of memories: 'The Last Bolshevik'

GOINGS AND COMINGS

Lesbian comedy 'Go Fish' quickly became a festival hit and legendary deal. As it opens in Britain, B. Ruby Rich describes its birth pangs and offers ten ways of viewing the fish that got caught



● This is a fish story about not the one that got away, but the one that got caught and won the trophy. Caught big time, in other words. But it's also a cautionary tale, one about marketing, identity and innocence. *Go Fish* – the movie, the trailer, the legend – wasn't always such. It was once just like its title – derived, presumably, from the beloved children's card game that uses "Go fish" as a command, but also, more pointedly, from the corny classic sign (gone fishin') hung on office doors throughout America when spring fever, that most uncapitalistic and anti-entrepreneurial syndrome, struck. It's probably fitting, then, that a little, low-budget, black and white independent film with a title signifying 'play' at its least hip, almost provincial best, should have evolved so immediately into a festival hit and legendary deal. This kind of success, after all, is the other kind of American fantasy. But in the process, care has to be taken that the fragile innocence and labour-of-love sincerity of the original doesn't evaporate on its way to the bank. If this article has a hidden agenda, it's the attempt to head off the backlash and argue that this film is far more than any mainstream distributor's fishing expedition.

Go Fish started life as a little film called *Max & Ely*. It was written in Chicago in 1991 by Rose Troche and Guinevere Turner, a couple of twenty-somethings smitten with each other and their project. It was a lesbian film, by and about and for lesbians. As Turner says, it was "the little film that could." For a while, though, it couldn't.

In 1992, Roche and Turner ran out of money. Their all-volunteer crew began to lose faith. Everybody had been working for free because they shared the dream of bringing a lesbian cinema into existence. Troche says, "if you don't think that you can walk up to any lesbian and say, 'hey do you want to make a film because

look at the shit that's out there?' and they're, like, 'I'm with ya'" – well, the consequences go without saying. So when they found themselves with little money, fewer friends and a film only partly made, they sent a letter to Christine Vachon in New York. As bad as things were, there was now a lesbian producer in the US helping independent films (*Poison*, *Swoon*) to get made. And her production partner, Tom Kalin, was a Chicago boy. Vachon read the letter, saw their 20 minutes of film, read the script and signed on. They were back in business.

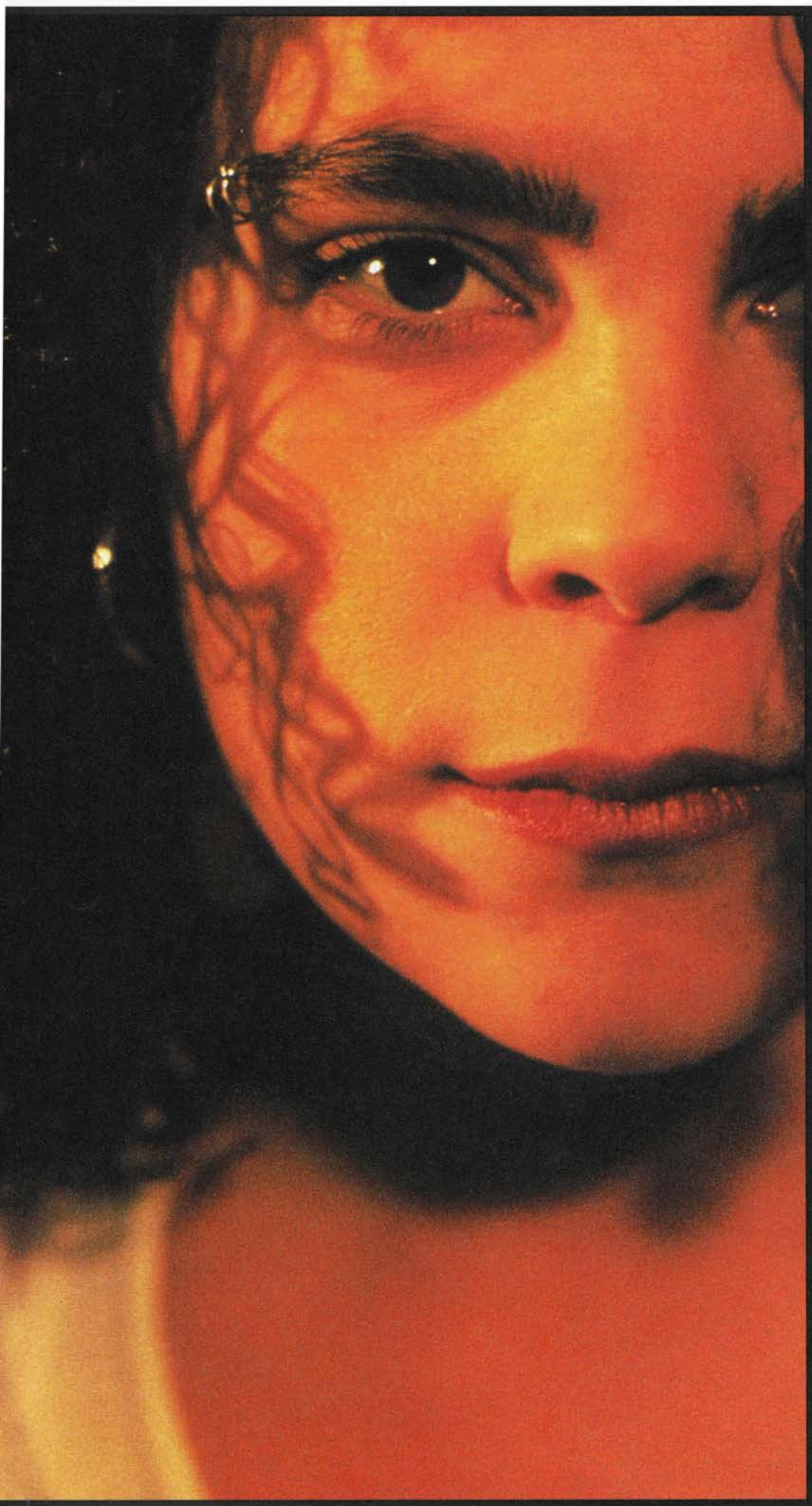
By 1992, John Pierson's Islet Films came up with completion money and shooting could be finished. By 1993, ex-lovers Turner and Troche were working and playing in New York. Troche was editing the footage, Turner was fine-tuning the voiceovers, and the Sundance Film Festival would soon decide to show the film. As soon as I saw it, fine-cut on an editing table, I was enchanted and started composing catalogue copy in my head: "*Go Fish* begins just about where coming-out films used to end." I wasn't particularly restrained in my choice of adjectives: wistful, lyrical, seriocomic, fanciful, plus "an assured cinematic ability to confer grace."

Go Fish came to Park City, Utah, with high hopes and lots of fears. By the opening day, director/co-screenwriter Rose Troche and actor/co-screenwriter Guinevere Turner had arrived. A box of nail clippers to be distributed as promo hadn't. Troche and Turner wondered if anyone would like their film in boytown – until its first screening. The crowd went nuts. "God, are they hot," said the straight women about the lesbians on screen. "Give her money to make another one quick," said the straight man about the lesbian on stage. Goldwyn made festival history by signing them to a distribution contract on opening weekend.

Then came the marketing. Unprecedented ads matched two women kissing (except that when it's printed too dark, one looks like a man, intentionally or not) with quirky handwritten copy. Trailers were in the theatres by May, playing back-up to other big-time quality product. Then the press kicked in. Turner, her hair arranged in front of her face like a beaded curtain, had a whole page in *Interview* touting her as a writer to watch; Rose, all pierced and intense-looking, got a pitch in *Rolling Stone* as the hot director for 1994; the two together got the number two slot in the *New Yorker* Talk of the Town section, which would be a major status symbol even if the writer (anonymous, as is customary for Talk contributors, even when Jacqueline Kennedy wrote an item) hadn't gone on and on about what a good flirt Turner is and how much all the adulation was pleasing Troche and, well, how charmingly full of themselves and hand-rolled cigarettes and beautiful women and Café Tabac these two were. It's unprecedented respect for a lesbian movie. And bear in mind that *Go Fish* hadn't even opened.

Go Fish, then, offers up a lovely fable: the little film that is saved from extinction, hits the bull's-eye and is swept into the marketplace leaving its hardcore fans to worry that the hype might backfire, that the innocence and fervour

A pair of twenty-somethings: Rose Troche, director, right; Guinevere Turner, actor and co-screenwriter, above left



that are the film's finest qualities will be mistaken for mere artifice once the context changes. If *Go Fish* is to get the respect it deserves – and to get it on its own terms, undistorted by the context of reception – it's important to understand the film's birthright. Consider these ten origin myths as a start.

Origin 1: 'A Comedy in Six Unnatural Acts' In 1975, Jan Oxenberg made *A Comedy in Six Unnatural Acts*, the first (and nearly last) lesbian comedy. As a send-up of both political correctness and homophobic stereotypes, it was ahead of its time. Technically raw and politically sophisticated, it was shot on a shoestring and went on to play for years at women's film festivals and cultural womyn's evenings. For me, *Go Fish* is the daughter of *Comedy*, the living proof that lesbian camp does exist and even has a lineage. Except that Troche and Turner have never seen it.

Origin 2: Puerto Rican rhythm Rose Troche's parents are Puerto Rican, from the island. She says that they couldn't understand why moving to the US didn't make them automatically able to pump out blue-eyed, blonde-haired babies instead of the kids they got. They moved all over the country, thereby obliging her to change schools mid-year to comply with the moves; she learned to fight and/or make people laugh. With no vocabulary for racism, Troche could never understand why their house was egged in the white suburban neighbourhoods her parents favoured or why her mother's accent on the telephone was a cause of social ostracism for her. She looks around the room, points out how differently she'd be treated at Sundance if she had a heavy-duty accent herself instead of assimilation speech. Moving around and switching communities became a theme. She went to a public university where students commuted and never really knew each other. She had lots of time to study lots of things in the nine years she spent at the University of Illinois. Industrial design, for instance, which was her major for several years. "Can you imagine anything more shallow than designing the *outside* of things?" jokes Troche, who clearly moved on to designing the guts.

Origin 3: Commune crisis Guinevere Turner doesn't like to talk about her past or her childhood, though she finally admits she was a commune kid. "That's the book I want to write: the children of the flower children." I ask if she was radiantly happy or damaged and she indicates the latter. Her college experience at Sarah Lawrence continued the commune theme: in other words an isolated and mutually dependent group, sure of themselves, with cultish tendencies. Probably great boot camp for the lesbian nation. She moved to Chicago to get away from scrutiny and to try to write. She was afraid her long-haired straight-girl look would make it hard to find dykes. So she went to an ACT-UP meeting, where she met Troche. The rest is history.

Origin 4: The bars, negative Turner and Troche did what any young self-respecting dyke couple in love would do: they went clubbing. And ►

◀ what did they see? "Oh no, not the rain scene from *Desert Hearts* again. Not *Personal Best*! Oh, *The Hunger* again." Video clips are the entertainment staple of lesbian bars all over the US. The trouble is that there's so little to clip. The pair didn't have anything against most of these films: in fact, Turner saw *Desert Hearts* when she was 18 and was totally fixated, as much by the lesbian couple in front of her as by the movie. No, it was the paucity that got to them. Then that hideous Blake Edwards vehicle came out: *Switch*. Troche remembers: "We thought, well, if they can do it, we can." Vows were taken. They stopped making T-shirts and staging ACT-UP benefit performances and making lesbian safer-sex erotic photographs, and got themselves a new concept. They'd make a film. "We loved having a project. It wasn't even a labour of love. It wasn't a labour."

Origin 5: The bars, positive They loved what they found in the bars: the energy and camaraderie, the fierce commitment to a life choice. And, I venture to add, the video. Not the video clips of mainstream movies featuring historical or farcical lesbians, but the alternative videotapes that were being produced, starting in the late 80s, in and for the community. Just as disco music fuelled gay male culture in the 70s, I'd argue, so has the bar video explosion fuelled lesbian identity in the 90s. Turner and Troche see their allegiances to this sector very clearly. Troche says: "I really hope the connection between our work and the work of people like Cheryl Dunye and Sadie Benning is recognised. It would be terrible if *Go Fish* were to be put up on a pedestal just because it's a feature." Film critics, though, tend to live outside this subculture: to them, *Go Fish* must look as though it dropped, unique, out of the sky, instead of out of a community with a shared aesthetic voice.

Origin 6: Happy writers write happy characters "No, we were miserable." Turner and Troche insist that they fought like cats and dogs when they were together and that *Go Fish* was a very deliberate attempt to imagine lesbian happiness. They wanted to make a feel-good movie in spite of themselves. "Yes, yes, this is so excellent" was their mantra for being a lesbian. "We need a jolt in our lives to remember: girl, don't hold your head down." Pride, you might say, was on their minds. Once there was a car accident in their script, and a suicide, and a confrontation with some violently homophobic men. But they got over it. Despite charming everyone who crosses their path, they continue to insist that their characters are much nicer than they are. And vice versa. When Turner tries to claim that she's not obnoxious like Max, Troche counters that it's more that she wears a different hat off-screen.

Origin 7: Chicago Rose Troche is a product of the Chicago avant-garde tradition and is proud to say that she wants her audience to know that what they're watching is a fiction. Hence the eloquent bridges between scenes that link emotion and gesture in a series of tops, games, hands. She studied at the University of

Their film is something of a Molotov Cocktail, tossed, like a bridal bouquet, to the waiting throng

Illinois with Hans Schall, her hero. "I owe it all to Hans," she insists, in tribute to the man who taught her that, given three minutes of footage and an optical printer, you could make a feature. "I like to see film grain." She prides herself on doing all her own opticals and freely admits her avant-garde training. "My negative cutter hated me because there are so many cuts in the film." She remembers struggling to find a film analogue for the scratch in hip-hop music when she was cutting to 'Feel That Love' at the end. She thinks it's a question of rhythm, wanting to get the groove. She jokes that, being Puerto Rican, she ought to have rhythm. "But I'm so white-washed, it's like: excuse me, could I have some of my culture back now?" Of course, the University of Illinois wasn't all a piece of cake. Wayne Boyer, the resident authoritarian, would never let her near the "good" optical printer, to this day.

Origin 8: Literary and filmic formation They, uh, vary. For Turner, studying fiction writing at Sarah Lawrence, the major influence was Jeanette Winterson's writing. She's still her hero. Turner writes short – very, very short – pieces of fiction and great one-liners. That's why *Go Fish* has such a coherent sense of vignette. Since the pair virtually finish each other's sentences, Troche immediately launches into a polemic about her desire to find a way to put the passion, the intensity of a love story like Winterson's *Written on the Body* into a film that can taste and smell and breathe like books do. For Troche, some of the influence was counter. She bemoans the way that Lizzie Borden and Chantal Akerman switched from their core lesbian audience to mainstream ones where heterosexuality has to rule on screen, but stops herself from "dissing" the sisters. "Go girl" is more their style. She loved *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*. Patricia Rozema is another hero, unmet so far, like the rest.

Origin 9: The lesbian community When Troche and Turner rounded up their lesbian company for the years-long *Go Fish* shoot, they still had a euphoric view of lesbianism and lesbians. In the beginning, the crew was all women, and Roche can still recall the energy field produced by that gathering: "Some days you'd see 15 women laying down the track for the camera." It was a fantastic experience. "There's just so much strength in this community," says Troche, bemoaning how little it is mobilised. When the tide turned and the gang got haircuts, got attitude, took off, well that's the lesbian community too. "They won't believe this is happening." Now Troche and Turner have a philosophical view of the film: "Even if lesbians who see it say: 'damn that *Go Fish*', then that's a success." If they swear they can top it, and they go off to make their own, great, let it spur successors and oppositions and debate, so long as it

generates more films. In this sense, their film is something of a Molotov Cocktail, tossed, like a bridal bouquet, to the waiting throng.

Origin 10: Genre traditions The original press kit for *Go Fish* has a fascinating statement from its director. She tries to talk in one and the same breath about the need to build a tradition of lesbian film-making and her desire to be recognised as a film-maker, period. She bemoans the fact that reaction so far is so fixated on content that comments on the film's complex structure and associative image-cutting go unexpressed. She argues that the genre need is so great that *Go Fish* is moved into the new slot "regardless of its merit" and earns its place "purely because of lesbian content". She talks wisely about how a starved market is asked to prove its loyalty over and over. She finally ends as follows, reconciled: "I believe I should deal with a subject I have a relationship with, and be able to make my art without taking a political vacation, and hope that with the fulfilment of these beliefs I will gain the momentum to see me through the tasks ahead." Go girls.

Decade of the dyke

This text goes to press on the eve of the *Go Fish* premiere at the 18th San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. Playing the massive 1,500-seat Castro Theatre on opening night, the film sold out on the first day of ticket sales. (But then, the festival itself sold out all its season passes on day one too.) When Troche and Turner come to San Francisco for their fix of adoration, they'll alternate interviews with the mainstream press with an informal lesbian discussion at the Bearded Lady Cafe. It's a symptomatic juxtaposition.

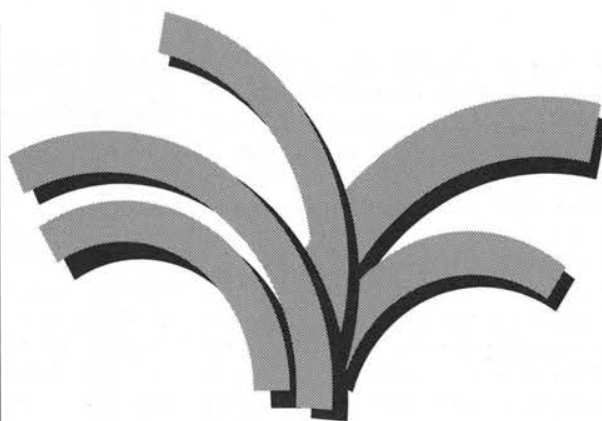
Today, there's a locomotion to lesbian and gay film work that's undeniable. Two years into the 'New Queer Cinema', film and video are still taking off, driven by the fuel of political passion and aesthetic urgency. The queers have staked out this historical moment, making sure it doesn't erode. And the new film-makers and video artisans are producing their work without compromising stylistic rigour. Who can resist, when there's a huge audience willing and waiting to respond to less traditional work? There's nothing like a political movement to make artists responsive and interactive and full of mandates, while audiences full of their own sense of empowerment can be counted on to swell the ranks of the ticket line and bring their own serious demands to the screening (and, sometimes even to the film-makers themselves).

Finally, critically, not incidentally, a lesbian feature cinema is emerging alongside lesbian video. After years of boys-only film-making, *Go Fish* is a lesbian dramatic film to cheer. It's the flagship for a season already sporting Shu Lea Cheang's new *Fresh Kill* and Midi Onodera's just completed *Sadness of the Moon*. If the papers are to be believed, there are already more than a dozen mainstream lesbian films in production or pre-production in Hollywood. If this keeps up, then the 90s may just be the decade of the dyke after all.

'Go Fish' opens on 8 July and is reviewed on page 42

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Shekhar Kapur's **BANDIT QUEEN**
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Ake Sandgren's **THE SLINGSHOT**
Patrice Leconte's **LE PARFUM D'YVONNE**
Alain Resnais' **SMOKING/NO SMOKING**
Yuri Mamin's **WINDOW TO PARIS**
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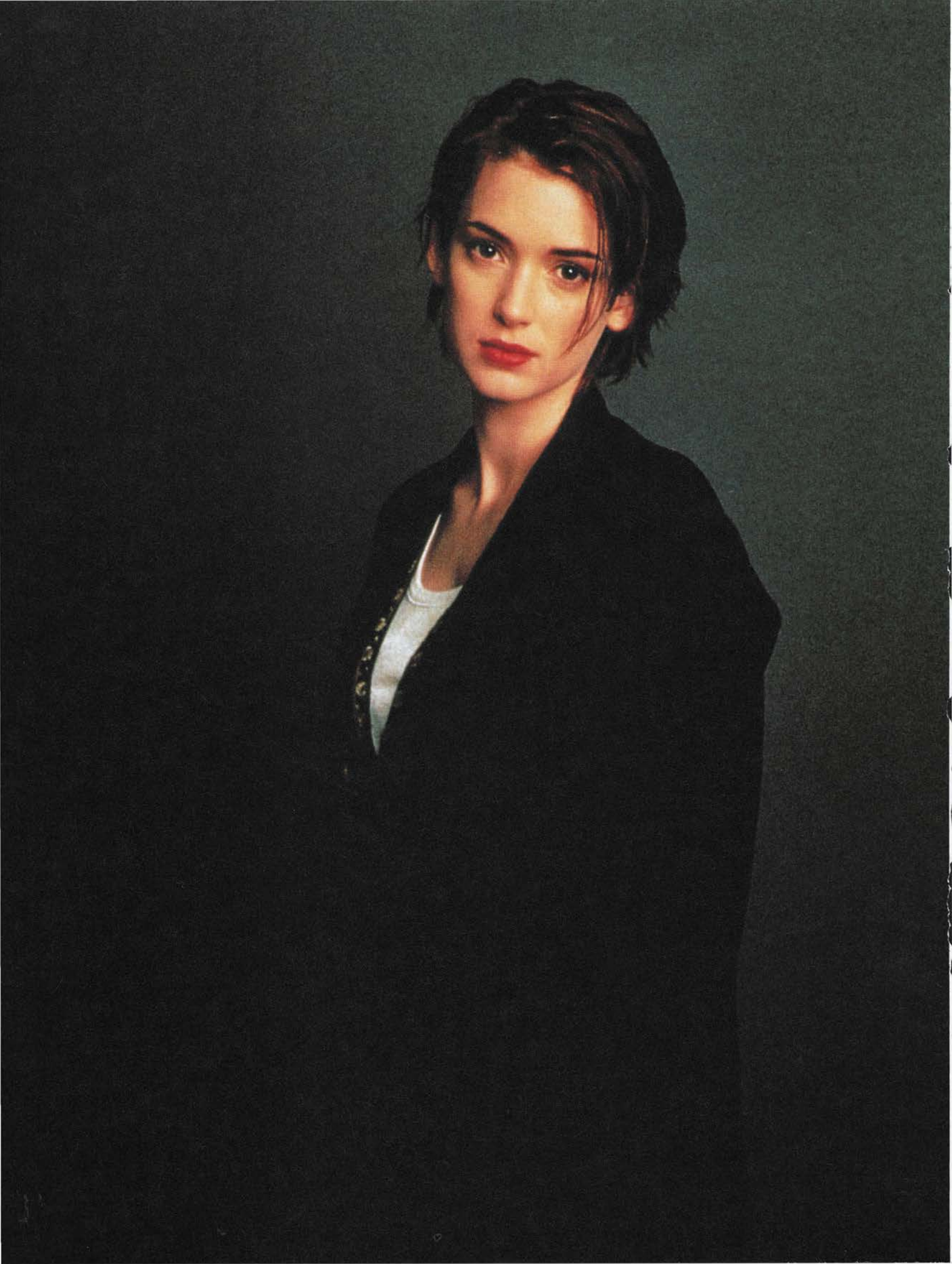
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A mix of music, time-travel and self-consciousness marks teen movies from 'American Graffiti' to 'Reality Bites'. By Jon Savage

BOOMERS AND BUSTERS

"Today's fifteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds were born between 1965 and 1974 when birth rates were dropping. Because of this drop, those 37 million people are referred to as the baby bust. In contrast, because of high rates between the end of World War II and 1964, the 75 million people born during that period are called the baby boom. Birth rates alone account for the formal identification of these two groups as distinct generations. So the baby bust generation has grown up in the shadow of the baby boom. We had the numbers and enjoyed a more affluent economy too. By the 1980s, the American economy had suffered severe economic setbacks and high unemployment. Divorce rates rose, and the patriarchal structure of the American nuclear family eroded. The eighties kids feel cheated – they feel that our parents loved us more, that schools were better, that life was easier." Donna Gaines, *Teenage Wasteland* (1990)

"In a very short time, I went from thinking (as I had been told over and over again) that my generation had nothing to say to thinking that it not only had everything to say but was saying it in a completely new way." Richard Linklater, introduction to *Slacker* (1992)

It's not enough just to be young – nor has it been since the Second World War, when the spread of American-style consumerism, the rise of sociology as an academic discipline and market research as a self-fulfilling prophecy, and sheer demographics turned adolescents into Teenagers. No longer in between, youth was at the centre, caught in a web spun out of others' projections.

Encoded into the idea of youth-as-consumer were and are all manner of hopes and fears. Teenagers may well have been the key to this brave new post-war world, but they harboured potentially uncontrollable energies which had to be policed. In a classic Puritan dichotomy, youth was simultaneously celebrated and derided, exploited and punished: the language of criminology and sociology – key phrase: 'juvenile delinquency' – is there right at the beginning of the teenage dream, the shadow of all that hopeful marketing-speak.

This shadow continues to haunt mainstream accounts of youth. Youth cannot exist for itself; it has to be emblematic – keyword: 'generation'. In Ben Stiller's *Reality Bites*, Vickie talks about the Aids test as being the rite of passage of her "generation"; in Richard Linklater's *Dazed and Confused*, a bunch of stoned kids start

talking decadism: "It's like the every other decade theory y'know. The 50s were boring, the 60s rocked. The 70s, ohmigod, they obviously suck. I mean c'mon. Maybe the 80s will be radical, y'know."

Both *Reality Bites* and *Dazed and Confused* exemplify a self-consciousness which has been present in teen movies since the 50s. A "sophisticated" comedy set in 1994, *Reality Bites* presents Winona Ryder as Lelaina, a college valedictorian (i.e. top student) trying to make her way in the media. Will she choose conformism or ethical individuality, as epitomised respectively by the two men with whom she forms a love triangle? *Dazed and Confused* is a straight period re-creation: a teen rite-of-passage movie set on the last day of High School, May 1976; a multiple-storyline mood piece.

Looking to either film for some kind of authentic youth expression may seem a waste of time: if you want the real teenage news, listen to pop. For many years, film has lagged behind pop music – always the motor of youth culture – for obvious reasons: higher budgets, tighter controls, longer production time. Yet with the vertical integration of the media industries, film and music have become intertwined as never before: both *Reality Bites* and *Dazed and Confused* are suffused by carefully selected soundtracks to be released on disc and cassette. The connection between film and music goes deeper. For the last 15 years, pop has subsumed the filmic techniques of cut-up, flashback and time-tripping into its very fabric. One listen to 'Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel', the 1981 hip-hop record made out of segments of six others (Chic, Queen, Blondie), takes you into the last ten years of black and white music, where the introduction of sampling technology has rendered both past and present into a huge data bank – instantly accessible to make something new out of the old.

There's another way of looking at youth movies. As in other industries, most notably TV, 'youth' is shorthand for research and development: it's the place where people play and, if they come up with something, they're allowed out in the real world. Film, TV, music: all these are industries which deal with perception – the way people look and feel about the world. So if we expect youth movies to contain new information, let's take *Reality Bites* and *Dazed and Confused* on their own terms and ask: what are they telling us? Is it anything new?

The immediate key to both is 70s retro – just as peculiar to babyboomers today as their own obsession with 50s retro was to their par- ▶



Making their way: Winona Ryder as Lelaina in 'Reality Bites', opposite; the haunted kids of 'Dazed and Confused', above



Time-tripping: 'American Graffiti' (1973), set at the point when the 60s was about to explode

ents. In *Reality Bites*, as you'd expect from a determinedly light romantic triangle, it's set dressing. The camera pans around the room of style maven 'Gap' manageress Vickie (Janeane Garofalo) and picks out Kiss posters, vinyl records stuck on the wall. Lelaina makes out with nerd MTV-style executive Michael (Ben Stiller) to the sound of Peter Frampton's 1976 US hit 'Baby, I Love Your Way'.

Have another joint

There is a code here. That Michael is shown only to pick at the surface of 70s retro is part of his lack of commitment; in contrast, when Lelaina makes out with slacker archetype Troy (Ethan Hawke) – "He'll turn this place into a den of slack" – it is to the sound of roots acoustic guitar music. 70s retro is one appurtenance of the powerless babybusters, for whom "the 90s dream" is to find a job and your own place, which "could take years". Both musically and sartorially, the style informs the development of the new American rock – grunge, flannel shirts, Neil Young guitars. But there's no Nirvana here, of course. *Reality Bites* has cameo appearances from second-rank grungists such as Dave Pirner (Soul Asylum) and Evan Dando (the Lemonheads). Troy has a band: his centre-parted haircut, sound (Woody Guthrie meets hip-hop and hardcore punk) and hit tune 'I'm Nuthin' are taken from this year's big post-grunge star, Beck, whose hit 'I'm a Loser' ("baby, so why don't you kill me?") inverts a generation's perceived powerlessness with a wit lacking in this over-telegraphed film.

With its contemporary pop-cult references covered, *Reality Bites* essays today's perception. It is determinedly media-post-modern: intertextual to the maximum. In-joke 1: cameo-player Dave Pirner is Winona Ryder's real-time boyfriend. In-joke 2: creepy Michael works for In Your Face TV, an exact replica of youth channel MTV. We see Lelaina's serious documentary about her generation trashed into an entertaining but obvious parody of MTV's quick blip sensationalism. The parody is full onscreen, taking up minutes of film time, as does Lelaina's original camcorder documentary.

The camcorder sequences ably telegraph

babybuster concerns: divorced parents, McJobs, pop-cult time-trips – so much so that they read like the definitions contained in Douglas Coupland's novel *Generation X*. Less successful is the film's attempt at radicalism: Lelaina gets back at her TV presenter boss ('Good Morning Grant') by substituting his cue cards. She knows he won't look at them, and he doesn't: "Personally I've had a preference for young girls" he announces to a stunned studio audience – yet this is left hanging. Cut to Lelaina moaning about losing her job.

Such cowardice leaves you irritated at the film's obvious manipulations: the pop-cult intertextualities fade after the first half, leaving an essentially conservative storyline. As Lelaina says at her graduation: "What are we going to do now, how are we going to repair the damage they [the previous generation] have left? (Rustles papers) The answer is, the answer is: I don't know." Oh, come on! Indeed, the film's form – pastiche, quick cutting, the variety of sources – often recalls nothing so much as that quintessentially 80s product: the pop video.

Dazed and Confused is a more thorough exploration of the 70s, named after an infamous Led Zeppelin song and soundtracked by the arcana of mainstream US boy taste from the period – Deep Purple, Ted Nugent, Aerosmith, Nazareth, Black Sabbath. The kids are loose, long-haired, flared, stoned; like the music's tepid funk inflections, they ape the jive of black style without any questioning. Like the just-graduates of



Psycho-geography: Richard Linklater's 'Slacker'

Reality Bites, the stoners of *Dazed and Confused* are haunted by the babyboomer privilege epitomised by the 'political' 60s.

Take this dialogue between two of the film's three intellectuals: "You know what I said last year, I was talking about going to law school so that I can be an ACLU lawyer and be in a position to help people who are getting fucked over and all that stuff. I was standing in line at the post office yesterday and I'm looking around and everyone's looking really pathetic and they got drool and this guy was bending over and you could see the crack, it was like eeurgh! and I realised it sounds good but I've got to confront the fact that I just don't like the people I've been talking about helping out. I don't think I like people period." "So you're not gonna go to law school, whaddya wanna do?" "I wanna dance." Right, and the next big fad, disco, is just around the corner.

Unlike the babybusters of *Reality Bites*, all the high-school teenagers in *Dazed and Confused* have cars. Mobility is easy, and is translated into form. Director Linklater decompresses the rigorous psycho-geography of his *Slacker* (1991), where the camera follows each character for a few seconds, even minutes, before following another, each linked by a chance passing – not a road movie, but a walk movie – into the more gentle cruising motion of that groundbreaking 1973 time-tripper, *American Graffiti*. There's even an explicit homage to that film's older character, John Milner, in the sleazy Wooderson ("That's what I like about high school girls: they get younger, I stay the same.") Both films use the past to tell us about the present. In the case of *American Graffiti*, the innocent, uncomplicated pleasures of on-the-cusp 1962 America (Beach Boys supplanting rock'n'roll, the 60s about to happen) are undercut by Vietnam. As the DC-6 drone intensifies at the film's end, there are biographical captions: Terry Fields (Toad) is "missing in action near An Loc December 1965", while Curt is "a writer living in Canada" – someone who crossed the border to avoid the draft. This political edge is informed by babyboomer confidence: as the film's shaman, DJ Wolfman Jack declaims, "It's a great big beautiful world out there." Although there is darkness at the edge of town, there is also possibility (symbolised by Curt's visit to Wolfman Jack's radio station). In looking back at a conservative time, Francis Ford Coppola and George Lucas capture not the dark side or the repressiveness, but an almost luminous immanence: America is still rich and still hopeful.

We know from *Generation X* movies like *Slacker* and *Reality Bites* that this hope has long disappeared. Draw a teen-movie time curve from *American Graffiti* (1973/1962) through to these early 90s films and, somewhere between *Over the Edge* (1979) and *River's Edge* (1986), the parents have gone. We're talking divorce, trailer parks, teen homelessness, maybe child abuse – the psycho-damage of Roseanne Barr, Axl Rose, Eddie Vedder, Kurt Cobain. As they keep saying in *Reality Bites*: "psychotic".

But nobody in *Dazed and Confused* (1993/1976) is psychotic. They still have parents who live together. There's some violence, and a deep

By Bea Campbell

'Shopping' and youth

The landscape of *Shopping* – Paul Anderson's British-based joyrider movie – is Gotham City with malls, with ubiquitous steam, and coal braziers borrowed from *Blade Runner*. Although it is billed as a New Wave youth movie, made by young men who aren't ashamed of watching *Lethal Weapon*, the locale is the crucial clue to its genre: this movie is not New Wave, but a throwback to dystopia, a universal terrain emptied of society and inhabited by scavengers and pirates.

If you didn't know what it was supposed to be about, you could be forgiven for seeing in *Shopping* shades of *The Terminator* without the special effects, or of *Batman* without the jokes: a landscape that belongs only to genre, that fixes the narrative in nowhere, in time but not in space. *Shopping* is not the movie that expresses the 90s, though no doubt it is a product of the 90s. It claims no moral or terrestrial centre, yet its landscape makes it a movie with a message: this is the future and it can fuck off.

But *Shopping* has missed the point. Perhaps more than at any time since the movies began, we are fascinated by film's nuances of place, by landscape as social space and by location as locality. All of this is squandered in *Shopping*'s withdrawal back to the future. Or to Docklands. Feral punks park up at blank, de-populated slabs of flats, evacuated riversides, speed up empty motorways and cruise around power stations and chemical factories, all steel chimneys and smoke. Steam is a regular visitor to this landscape. Like the braziers which pop up as props, the steam is a promiscuous icon, variously suggestive of industrial power (from which our punks are excluded) and squalid underground spaces – uninhabitable places.

All of this is wrong. We know what this movie is supposed to be about: joyriders, the 90s rebels without a cause, the children of Thatcherism whose cult of the car and connection to their class or community make them emblematic of her mantra – there's no such thing as society, there are only individuals and families. But the point about joyriders is that they are not vagrants, hoboes of the

highways, they aren't homeless, they don't live in cars: they are boys who live somewhere – at home with their mams and dads.

Landscape is not simply the location that absorbs the joyriders' auto-acrobatics, it is where these terrestrials take control of social space. That's what they refuse to share with the people they live with. But by emptying the landscape of community, *Shopping* erases that conflict, giving instead lads who are talking only to themselves. Joyriders aren't outside society, they're having an argument in it. And the site of that argument is the domestic domain, the landscape of everyday life, the neighbourhood.

Joyriders are animated not so much by "lust for life" (that's what *Shopping*'s blurb claims) as by a dangerous liaison between life and death and a cult of suicidal virtuosity. The drama of their displays in the 90s has been that they have hijacked the public space of their community and created a lacuna, a no-go area. Their spectacle commands an audience – the community itself. The terrain and its society are also protagonists in the spectacle of joyriding: they are part of what is at stake.

How odd that *Shopping* should have misunderstood this, that the movie should have lost its local nerve and hence the reverberations of class, community and culture that make joyriding both local and global and, therefore, such an epochal phenomenon. *Twoccing* – taking without the owner's consent – is the passion of landstriders whose lives are irredeemably parochial, mediated by the quintessential modern commodity, the car. Their clothes are anchored in class, the expression of regional passions for transcontinental commodities. 'Casual' may appear as Essex man or Meadowell boy, and shell-

sueded dudes in Perth, Luton, Manchester, Cardiff have their regional inflection; here it's Berghaus, there it's Chipie, somewhere else it's Cheignon.

What joyriders aren't, is punks. Presumably Anderson, who as a Tynesider ought to know better, imagined that punk gave his characters a transcendental oppositional flavour. But that effaces the conservatism and conformism of joyriders and more importantly blurs their quest to appropriate the insignia of other classes and make it their own. Perhaps Anderson imagined that his characters' sub-Southend patois – as in "fahhhhhkin" – located them at the centre of the universe. But it doesn't – it displaces and disconnects them.

So *Shopping* isn't really a movie about cars, or clothes, or style, or the civil wars that joyriders wage with their neighbourhoods – it's a boy-beats-up-boy (Tommy versus Billy) and boy-meets-and-loses-girl (Billy versus Jo) movie. And it falls to the girl to expose the flaws in the beautiful boys' mastery – none of them is as bright or as brave as she. But this means that *Shopping* can't do justice to the flaky masculinity which is the object of its gaze: this appears as fully formed rather than masculinity in the making, emulating the crazy, frightened, dangerous and impregnable template performed so brilliantly by, say, De Niro in *Mean Streets*, or Sylvester Stallone in *Rocky*.

Anderson has given us a muted, shuffling story, what Mel Gibson in *Lethal Weapon* calls "kind of a guy thing". Had he stayed with the strengths of his subject – the combustible connections between landscape and locality, boys, cars and communities – he might have come up with something surprising.

'Shopping' opens on 24 June and is reviewed on page 54

anger running beneath the surface, but this is American pop at its moment of greatest self-indulgence: the chemical/sexual freedoms of the 60s redacted into thoughtless hedonism. Like the stoner guy says, in his marijuana-leaf T-shirt and pimp hat, about George Washington's wife: "She was a hip, hip lady. She'd have a big fat bowl waiting for him when he got home." Linklater is too sharp to let this boy stuff pass without comment, and there are some neat pro-fem touches – a feminist reading of Gilligan's Island in the ladies loo being one highlight. Yet *Dazed and Confused* so convinces you that these kids are apolitical – the brutal freshman-hazing rituals are barely commented on – that when Pink (Jason London) hits his own moral crossroads (should he sign an anti-drug testament and lie?) you shrug your shoulders and walk away: is that all he's got to worry about? Uh, cool. Let's, like, have another joint.

Shamedly aspirational

If *Dazed and Confused* veers into *Beavis and Butt-Head* territory, that's because it's more attuned to the zeitgeist than the shamedly aspirational *Reality Bites*: I know Lelaina walks out on Michael, but did you notice that Troy is wearing a suit at the film's end? Do you think he's going to inherit a trust fund from his dead daddy? The 1976 teens don't care, and they get away with it: the adult figures in the film, just as in *American Graffiti*, are benign, firm, or outwitted. The drug of choice is marijuana, the petty hooliganism just a lark. *Carrie* this is not. At the end, as in *Slacker*, Pink and his friends break out of the film's location, Austin, and hit the open road – still a powerful shorthand symbol for freedom, in Linklater's words, "a spiritual breakthrough". This sense, however ambiguous – you know that Pink could well be in NA or dead of Aids by now – offers a fragile hope which, together with the seductiveness of the teen paradise depicted (the music almost sounds good) shows that form can dictate content, that the past can bleed into the present.

These films aim to deal with one of our central dilemmas: the lack of rituals that bridge adolescence and adulthood. Beneath all their pop culture and teenage encumbrances, they represent two approaches to this perennial rite of passage. *Reality Bites* internalises 80s forms into a cynicism which says: conform. *Dazed and Confused*, on the other hand, feels like a gentle victory: experimentation may mean self-indulgence, but it doesn't mean death. A refusal, however small, can make a difference.

Both films deal with the perception of today's teens – where the past is not linear but serial, constantly changing and informing the present. *Dazed and Confused* carries this through the internalised powerlessness of the late 80s – that hangs around *Reality Bites* like a miasma – into the sense of liberation that still existed in the mid-70s. Just as the excitement of *Poison* was undercut by its sourcing of a repressive period (the 50s were not a good time for homosexuals), so the dazed and confused kids of 1976 are given grace by their brief moment in the sun. *'Reality Bites' opens on 17 June and is reviewed on page 50 of this issue; 'Dazed and Confused' opens on 16 September*



Landscape without location: the joyriders of 'Shopping'

● The difficulties facing documentary-makers covering the political landscape of Northern Ireland are well known: the broadcasting ban, the Official Secrets Act, court orders, the requirements of "balance", official hostility. It is not an easy environment. As the television journalist Peter Taylor has said, "We are not free to cover Northern Ireland in the same way that we can cover other parts of the world."

But despite these restrictions, documentary-makers have turned in a significant body of stimulating, informative and provocative work. UTV's *Unlocking the Maze* (1993), Channel 4's *Pack Up the Troubles* (1991), Peter Taylor's *The Maze: Enemies Within* for BBC's *Inside Story* (1990), Thames' *The Troubles* (1981) and *At the Edge of the Union* about Martin McGuinness for the BBC series *Real Lives* (1985) all stand out as good television and important contributions to the debate. Michael Whyte and Mary Holland's film *Creggan* (1979), winner of a Prix Italia, is due to be shown again later this year. And now Whyte and Holland have teamed up again to make *Shankill*, a rare glimpse of the world of the Loyalist working class in West Belfast.

Whyte's approach in his new documentary is largely the same as in *Creggan*, which looked at the North of Ireland's Catholic community. His distinction as a film-maker is to avoid overcrowding the piece; instead he allows a select number of interviewees to talk at length and with relatively few interruptions, intercutting with undramatic but forceful images over which the viewer is allowed time to reflect and make connections. The editing is careful and unhurried, the images highlight the text.

Typical is the sequence in *Shankill* in which an interviewee talks about the denominational fragmentation inherent in Protestantism. There are 23 denominations on the Shankill Road alone. The camera goes on an extended tour: image upon image of every conceivable sort of place of worship, from glorified sheds to semi-cathedrals. By the time we return to the interviews, we have understood the larger point about the place of individualism in the Ulster Protestant mentality, and the social consequences of a religion that stresses the individual route to salvation. Shankill people have been raised to make up their own minds, and, as the interviewee points out, "when a whole lot of different people make up their minds,

they make them up in a whole lot of different ways." The result is political and communal fragmentation. By contrast, the Catholic experience – one church – has tended to reinforce notions of communal solidarity.

This fundamental contrast in the two communities' outlooks and social organisation, which *Shankill* makes simply but eloquently, is central to any understanding of the present state of the conflict. As the film points out, perceptions of the relative positions of the Catholic and Protestant communities have changed radically in the last 25 years. At the beginning of the civil rights marches, in 1967-69, Catholics suffered discrimination in housing, jobs and political life. By organising, they forced reform, and in so doing drove the Protestants, who resisted even the most moderate reform, into retreat on just about every front: economic, territorial, cultural, psychological and political. Stormont, the Protestant parliament, is gone, along with most (but not yet all) of the Protestants' privileged access to jobs and housing; the B-Special reserve police force, Protestant defenders of the Protestant state, has been disbanded; the proportion of Protestants in the population is getting smaller; Sinn Féin, the arch-enemy, adds to its total of city councillors at every election and the day is approaching when nationalists will take control of the City Hall – Belfast is going the same way as Derry a generation earlier.

Protestants on the Shankill, on the evidence of this film, are painfully aware of their inability to halt the retreat or to duplicate the Catholics' collective effort. Although *Shankill* does not directly tackle the causes of Protestant paramilitary violence, it nevertheless goes some way to explaining their increasing blood-lust: the film's interviewees are describing a largely inward-looking and closed community that feels it is being outdone and outwitted by people its members were brought up to look on as inferior. Everywhere on the defensive, the more militant members of that community are lashing out at the enemy. They can justify the indiscriminate nature of their attacks because all Catholics are the enemy.

Shankill is not without its faults. Film-making of this genre always runs the risk of conveying an overdeveloped sense of sympathy

between the film-makers and their interviewees, one that the audience is invited to share. It is as if the journalists are saying: here are these people, we really liked them and thought they were interesting and we think you will, too. The difficulty with *Shankill* – and the same is true of *Creggan* – is that with only a minimum of commentary to provide context and history, we are asked to take a lot on trust.

Whyte and Holland do not address the extent to which the voices of those taking part are typical of the community as a whole. The interviewees, with two exceptions community or trades union activists, are articulate, thoughtful and reasonable, their analyses cogent and insightful. They are acutely class-conscious and have no illusions about the nature of their traditional middle-class leaders, "the fur coat and diamond brigade". They are interested in the Irish dimension of their heritage as well as in the British, and are encouraging the study of Irish language and history among their neighbours. These are refreshing voices, but are they a fair representation of opinion on the Shankill Road?

Nor do the film-makers do more than skim the darker side of the Shankill. This, after all, is where the 'Shankill Butchers', the Loyalist murder gang led by the deranged and now happily deceased Lenny Murphy, had their homes. In the late 70s and early 80s, Murphy and his associates were responsible for a string of grisly sectarian attacks, bludgeoning, slicing and torturing their Catholic victims to death. Nor did the sectarian murders end with the demise of Murphy. The Shankill is still home to UFF and UVF killers, men who regularly sally forth to assassinate Catholic workmen on building sites, or the sons and wives of Sinn Féin councillors and election workers in their homes. It was the presence of Loyalist paramilitaries in the Shankill that led to last November's IRA attack on a fish shop, when ten people died: the intended target had been an upstairs office which the IRA claimed had been used by the UFF.

Whyte says that he and Holland wanted to show that there are reasonable voices in Loyalist areas, and, to be fair, it would not have been easy to find people willing to talk on camera about the paramilitaries. Nevertheless, at a time when the UFF and UVF are out-killing the IRA by three to one, it seems a serious omis-

HEARING VOICES

How have documentarists covered the political landscape of Northern Ireland? And what is Michael Whyte's achievement with 'Creggan', and his new portrait of Loyalist Belfast, 'Shankill'? By Ronan Bennett

sion, particularly because *Shankill* is likely to stand – for some time at least – as the television portrait of Loyalist Belfast.

There was no such reticence about tackling the issue of community attitudes to political violence in *Creggan*, made for Thames during the run-up to the 1979 general election. The film is a restrained but powerful attack on the social, economic and political injustices faced by Catholics in Creggan, a working-class estate in Derry which was begun in 1946 to re-house slum-dwelling Catholics. Whyte and Holland make clear that Creggan's existence is a cynical exercise in gerrymandering, part of the Unionist strategy to retain control of a city they had dominated since the seventeenth century, even though by the 60s Catholics outnumbered Protestants by two to one.

The techniques of *Creggan* are the same as those used in *Shankill*: long interviews intercut with a montage of quiet but potent images – kids playing on waste ground; security cameras; soldiers on patrol; people going to mass. A camera mounted on a car tours slowly through the treeless and almost peopleless landscape of the vast and desolate estate. When a woman says that after a while she realised she had been moved to a “wilderness”, we understand all too well: in its bleakness *Creggan* is little different from any of the other disastrous urban developments of the 50s and 60s. But as the film continues, the quietly spoken mums and dads who have been discussing their housing conditions – something everyone can understand – turn to more controversial and less accessible subjects.

After the riots of 1969, the sectarian Royal Ulster Constabulary lost control of law and order in Derry. The police were replaced by British soldiers, who were initially welcomed by the Catholic community but soon began to be seen as the new armed defenders of the Orange State. Attitudes soured. Riots started again, this time with soldiers firing rubber bullets and tear gas to keep the Catholic population under control.

As *Creggan* progresses, it becomes clear that the mums and dads who have been discussing the problems of urban blight do not like the soldiers. They resent them. They complain about their presence and provocative behaviour. The camera picks out details of the decor

in their homes: in one living room there is a mounted rubber bullet on the television. A woman names the dead from the area. She has listed well over a dozen names by the time she stops and says: “I’m sure there are more but I just can’t remember them.” When a soldier is killed, the mums and dads find it hard to be sympathetic, having to force themselves to remember that this was a human life. “Somebody cared about him,” a pleasant middle-aged mother says, “but when you see them patrolling on the streets you don’t think of them as somebody’s son.” But she would be “very sympathetic to a Provo shot, because it would be someone you would know.”

At the time *Creggan* was made – before the hunger strikes, before the election to Westminster of Bobby Sands – the government line was that the IRA was able to exist only because the ‘godfathers’ terrorised the Catholic community. This illusion was shattered when Catholic voters elected Sands, a convicted IRA man, and Adams, President of Sinn Féin, to parliament. The line had to be changed and as a result the whole Republican community was demonised (there’s a documentary crying out to be made). But back in 1979, the official position was that ordinary, decent people did not support the IRA. And yet here, in *Creggan*, were people of blinding ordinariness and manifest decency saying to camera that they understood and sympathised with the young men from their area who took up the gun.

One mother talks about her son’s involvement with the IRA: she first noticed it when he began to take “a very abnormal interest in Irish history”. Instead of buying her birthday presents of perfume, he bought her plaques of Irish heroes, Wolfe Tone and James Connolly. When she found out he had joined, she says she “yanked him out of the chair and hit him around the head”. She “was knocking hell out of him” until a neighbour came in and pulled her off. Why did she react like this? It wasn’t because she thought it “morally wrong” to join the IRA: “I never used that argument. It was all based on fear for him.” When her son was arrested, the army raided the house. “Once he had been arrested he was my son and all my support was going behind him, irrespective of whether it was right or wrong. That was the stand I adopted from the first day.”

What *Creggan* demonstrated is that not only

was there widespread sympathy for the IRA, but that it came from ordinary people who had an understandable – even justifiable – sense of anger and grievance. After Bloody Sunday in January 1972, that anger increased. Whyte and Holland interview the mother of one of the 13 marchers shot down and killed by British paratroopers and show the victim’s gravestone: “Murdered by British Troops”. It was then, in 1979, and remains today a shocking thing for people on the English side of the Irish Sea to be faced with. Significantly, the adjacent grave of a local boy who had joined the British Army and was assassinated by the IRA is marked with the more neutral “killed”.

In 1979 this was all challenging, uncomfortable stuff (it still is, of course), and Britain being Britain, there was no question of *Creggan* being banned – not in the land of free speech. But once the film was completed, Whyte was frustrated to discover that there were no plans to broadcast it (a very British way of proceeding). Though no one said so openly, it was clear to Whyte that neither Thames nor the IBA liked his film. Whyte was told that “it wasn’t the right moment to transmit it” and “it was difficult to find a slot”. Only after he managed to raise some publicity did Thames, a year later, come up with a transmission date: at 11.00 on a weekday evening.

But if the schedulers hoped the film would die a death, they miscalculated. Instead *Creggan* won a Prix Italia for best documentary of the year. Thames held a champagne reception at which there were speeches about the film being a testament to the company’s position at the cutting edge of British broadcasting. But in spite of the glowing testimonials, Thames did not give its star documentary another airing. That was left to Channel 4, six years later.

Creggan and *Shankill* are complementary films, absorbing and provocative portraits of ‘two sides’ about whom we hear a great deal but understand little. They also illustrate that in spite of not being free to cover the North, television journalists who are prepared to look beyond stereotype and convention can still produce work that contributes to British understanding of the conflict in Ireland.

‘Shankill’ will be screened on Channel 4 on 7 July at 9.30 pm and *‘Creggan’* at midnight on 5 July

With enough plot strands to keep a sitcom going for years, Edward Yang's first comedy is an exuberantly sardonic account of Taiwanese city life. By Tony Rayns

YANG'S COMEDY ON THE SET OF 'A CONFUCIAN CONFUSION'

Seduction and other things: Liren gives Ming a lesson in seduction, below; Qiqi lunches with Molly, opposite

The new restaurant next door to Edward Yang's Atom Films office is called – much to the annoyance of the authorities, who refused to register it as a business name – Youguan Danwei. It means 'The Department Responsible', a term that everyone who grew up under martial law in the Taiwan of the 60s and 70s associates with the government department responsible for censorship of the arts and media. It's owned by the same guy who runs the fashionable Tanhua Tou (Talking Heads) restaurant on Hsinyi Road, but this is more of an informal café: short menu, long-haired staff, NME Singles of the Week playing in the background. As you'd expect, it has become the staff canteen for the Atom Films crowd. Both the place and its customers embody a mood that's new in Taipei: too cool to be rebellious, but cynical about politics, disrespectful of the old order, and wryly detached from the city's assertive affluence.

When he first set up in business as an independent producer, Edward Yang called his company Yang and his Gang. The name, of course, resonated with the subject of *A Brighter Summer Day*: the psychological plight of the loner Xiao Si'r, caught up in the fierce gang loyalties and rivalries of his neighbourhood. When that film was finished the gang broke up, as gangs do, and Atom Films took its place. The name this time evokes one of Yang's childhood cartoon heroes, Atom Boy, and reflects both Yang's own proficiency as a cartoonist and the youthful energy of the team he has now gathered around him. Most of these kids were students in Yang's film classes at the National Institute for the

Arts in Taipei; some played bit parts in *A Brighter Summer Day* while they were still students and some have worked with Yang on his stage plays *Likely Consequence* (Ruguo, 1992) and *Period of Growth* (Chengchang Jijie, 1993), but hardly any of them have been key collaborators on a feature film. The film they've been making is Yang's first comedy, *A Confucian Confusion*.

Me-generation materialism

The film's Chinese title *Duli Shidai* means 'Time of Independence', which also means that it's calculated to raise government hackles in Taiwan. On the face of it, it connotes the desire to break free of social, professional and familial ties that currently preoccupies many Taiwanese; this phenomenon has its upside in, for example, the formation of independent film companies and its downside in a pervasive me-generation materialism and selfishness. But the title also invokes Taiwan's formerly illegal independence movement, which argues that the island should forget about reunification with China on either side's terms and go it alone. If Taiwan does ever declare independence in this sense, the People's Liberation Army will be swarming all over it next day, so it won't happen. But at least it's now possible to air the issue without being arrested. The film has nothing to say about this political movement as such, but the thrust of its argument is that Taiwanese-Chinese urgently need to rethink their relationship with China's traditional social structures – that is, with their Confucian roots.

Like all Yang's films, this one is built around a group of rounded and fully thought-through



characters. It's easy to see the work that Yang and his collaborators put into devising and developing their protagonists: large sliding doors at one end of Atom Films' open-plan office double as marker boards, and on them are Yang's cartoon sketches of the eight main characters with detailed notes about their backgrounds, personal histories, dress-sense and temperaments. Obviously the characters take shape with particular actors in mind, but the conceptions are strong enough and clear enough in Yang's mind to trump all vagaries of casting. Before my first visit to the production, the central role of Molly, a rich kid looking for some way to occupy herself, has already been recast twice, both times necessitating a partial reshoot of material in the can.

The plot into which these characters are stirred is complex and detailed, but never confusing because it is always meticulously logical. The film chronicles two-and-a-bit days in the lives of a dozen prototypical Taipei residents; the characters come from every conceivable social background, but most see themselves as upwardly mobile and their paths cross in offices, restaurants, bars and apartments that are irredeemably middle class. During the film's span several of these people go through crises. Five of them are fired or quit their jobs, and three long-standing relationships are strained to or past breaking point. Virtually everyone in the film has to question the future course of his or her life, at least fleetingly, and one struggling philosopher (the author of a book called *A Confucian Confusion*) experiences a personal epiphany when he's struck by a blindingly obvious truth. All of this is intended as social satire, and the main challenge facing Yang is to keep the characters credible and engaging while kicking the shit out of their pretensions.

Smooching on the dancefloor

The film has had an unusually long gestation period and, thanks to the recasting of some roles, two false starts. My first visit to the shoot takes place in December 1993, when I'm in Taipei to attend the annual Golden Horse Film Awards. Yang began much earlier in the year, but it's only since November that the production has really been on the rails. Yang had told me that things were moving in a fax before I arrived: "It's been quite an experience, so new that I can't even say what to expect the next day. In a way it's an adventure, the kind I hope every new film I make will offer."

I find Yang and his crew filming in a large music pub called Tu, hidden away in a basement across from the Howard Plaza Hotel. It's late morning, but the scene takes place late at night, so Yang has the place crowded with extras. The scene features three of the main characters: the fledgling civil servant Ming, his office colleague Liren (vastly more experienced and cynical than Ming himself) and a young woman named Feng, who has just lost her job. Ming has been called to the pub by Liren, and arrives to find him on the point of seducing his new acquaintance Feng – which turns out to mean nothing more than a quick act of casual sex in the pub's toilets. The scene ends with



Liren drunkenly agreeing to do Ming a favour, as both sit under a giant video projection of an American basketball game.

The shot Yang is setting up when I arrive is purely expositional: the camera starts on Ming as he talks his way past the doorman and then sweeps across the room as he looks for Liren, both the camera and Ming eventually finding him smooching with Feng on the dancefloor. It requires several takes, mostly because of the complexity of the camera movement. The next shot on the list is an extended take of Liren's conversation with Ming under the video projection; the camera position is fixed, but there's a certain amount of movement as extras pass through the frame. This time, the weight of the shot sits squarely on the shoulders of the actors – the *mise en scène* plays its part, of course, but Yang is relying on his actors to engage and hold the audience. Although the film is committedly humorous, nothing here is played for laughs. The comedy springs from the discrepancy between the stolid, upright Ming and the borderline-seedy Liren and their incompatible reactions to everything from bankruptcy to casual sex.

A couple of days later, watching the rushes in the Atom Films office, what Yang is doing becomes much clearer. Running through the successive takes of the conversation between Ming and Liren, you can see the two actors getting more and more into the situation, relaxing into their roles, adding new gestures and emphases, going beyond the scripted dialogue – in short, bringing the scene to life. It turns out that the pub scene is unusual in being bro-

ken up into several shots; many scenes are being filmed in sequence shots, precisely to give the actors the space and autonomy of performance they need to make their own contributions. Hence the recasting earlier in the production: those who left were actors who couldn't keep pace with the demands placed on them by Yang and the other actors. Hence also Yang's sense of adventure; he has never before made a film in which he has asked his cast to participate so fully.

Learning from Woody Allen

This new interest in performance sounds rather unmomentous by international standards, I know, but it means a lot in Taiwan, which has never had either a movie 'star system' like the one that powers the Hong Kong film industry or a professional training institution for actors of the kind found in China. Coincidentally Hou Xiaoxian (whose career has diverged from Yang's since their collaboration on *Taipei Story* in 1985) has also reached the point of wanting a richer creative participation from his actors; his major difficulty during the *Puppetmaster* shoot, he has told Taiwan interviewers, was getting results from actors whose only training had been a stint on Taiwan television. The fact is that the virtual collapse of Taiwan's film industry in the last decade has forced a director-led cinema into being: ambitious directors have had no choice but to become their own producers, production managers, acting coaches, editors and unit publicists. After colossal and hugely demanding films like *A Brighter Summer Day* and *A City of Sadness*, it's not surprising that directors like Yang and Hou are looking to share the creative load with their collaborators.

Edward Yang's advantage over Hou Xiaoxian is that his work as a lecturer in film in Stan Lai's Department of Drama at the National Institute for the Arts has brought him into close contact with the most promising young talents in the country. It has also obliged him to think ▶

The comedy springs from the discrepancy between the stolid Ming and the borderline-seedy Liren and their reactions to everything from bankruptcy to casual sex

◀ more about the craft of acting; his two recent stage plays both started out as acting exercises for his classes. In consequence, the working atmosphere at Atom Films often seems like an extension of what went on in Yang's teaching. While I'm there, looking at more rushes, one actress reports that watching a Woody Allen movie on tape has given her new ideas for the way she approaches her character. Yang later tells me that there was a visible improvement in the next scene she had to play.

Cheerful cynicism

My second visit to the shoot comes in March 1994, as it nears its end. By this time, a scout from the Cannes Film Festival has viewed some of the rough assembly and expressed an interest in inviting the film for competition, so Yang suddenly finds himself racing against the clock. The film needs perhaps five more days of shooting or reshooting, on a variety of locations, and Yang has decided to start work on the picture-edit in the time he has free between shooting days; all of the post-production (including the sound-mix and the subtitling in French) will have to be done in time for the Cannes selection deadline in April. This time, I'm here primarily to help Yang with the challenge of subtitling a film that will have at least 50 per cent more dialogue than an average feature.

I'm driven straight from the airport to the Taipei suburb of Tienmu, where the unit is filming on location in a private apartment. This turns out to be the home of Ni Shujun, the experienced actress who has ended up with the role of Molly and has made it completely her own. Yang is using her apartment for two distinct settings, neither of them connected with the character of Molly herself. Before I get there, they have pressed Ni's bedroom and bathroom into service as Feng's apartment, for a scene in which Feng puts her opportunistic and self-deluding boyfriend Larry through the mill. Now they've shifted to the living room, which has been completely refurnished to stand as the home of Molly's friend and assistant Qiqi.

The scene is short and simple. Qiqi comes home from a disturbing day at the office, finds her father and younger brother arguing over the television, takes a call from Molly, and goes straight out again to meet her. In narrative terms, the scene serves as a small bridge – and an excuse to give us a brief glimpse of the asinine TV talk show fronted by Molly's sister. But it also gives us our only insight into Qiqi's background and circumstances: a small, tastelessly furnished lower-middle-class home, in which she has to play 'mother' to two overweight men. Yang is taking the whole scene from a fixed angle in one master shot; a close-up of the television screen will be inserted later. But this tiny and apparently unimportant scene is a paradigm of his method throughout the film. The framing turns the scene into a vignette of family life that allows us to grasp the emotional dynamics of the relationships (dependencies?) at a glance. At the same time, the careful art direction and set dressing construct a precise image of Chinese lower-middle-

The careful art direction and set dressing construct a precise image of lower-middle-class affluence



Self-deluding: Larry contemplates revenge on Birdy

class affluence: a piece in the jigsaw of the film's social panorama.

During the following week in the Atom Films office, I divide my attention between the film's sprawling dialogue transcript and the nearby Steenbeck on which Yang and his editors are cutting the film. Yang has been saying that he expects to take no more than three days to reach fine-cut stage, thanks to his decision to go with sequence shots wherever possible, and his forecast proves amazingly accurate: it's possible to watch the film from start to finish by the morning of their fourth day of work. Seeing *A Confucian Confusion* as a continuous whole for the first time reveals the scale of the production team's achievement. It's a movie that combines the social and psychological observation of Yang's other films with a freer and more spontaneous approach to emotion and character. And, in its exuberantly sardonic way, it adds up to an account of city life in the 90s more scathing than anything Yang has attempted before. It's as if the experience of working with a group of like-minded young people has emboldened him. Where the films *Taipei Story* and *The Terroriser* were founded on his own acute perceptions of the rapid social changes going on around him, this feels more like a film caught up in the issues it lays bare. It has enough plot strands and back-story to keep a sitcom in business for several seasons; it even has a happy ending that feels fully justified by the twists and turns of the preceding two hours, yet still manages to play like a cheerfully cynical comment on our need for wish-fulfilling happy endings.

Urban types

Only two of the leading characters are overt caricatures, both of them men. One is the playwright Birdy, an outrageous phoney who tends to expand the number of roles for women in his plays to fit the number of aspiring actresses available to 'audition' for them. Birdy came to cultural prominence doing post-modern Taiwanese operas, but is now attempting his first

popular comedy. The film opens with his press conference about it, conducted on roller skates, in which he fends off the suggestion that he's selling out with the comment: "What's more democratic than the box office? Buying a ticket is like casting a vote." The other caricature is the rich kid Akeem, heir to a business fortune, just back from a deal-making trip to China. Gullible and none too smart, he has agreed to marry Molly – an arrangement that will cement a wished-for link between their wealthy families – but senses a certain lack of emotion. Trained by his business adviser Larry to think in concrete political terms, he describes their engagement in a way that betrays the anguish in his soul: "Before we unify, like Taiwan and China, we agree a 'One country-Two governments' formula: no cohabitation, no premarital sex and no fights. Then, after unification, we'll stick to the principle 'One country-Two systems'..."

If the whole film were pitched at that level of political satire, then Taiwan's newly liberal Government Information Office (the body responsible for domestic censorship and export licences) might well be giving Yang a lot of trouble. But fortunately, politics in Taiwan is still an essentially male preserve, and the film's female characters help guide the satire into other areas. Molly, for example, is at a loose end precisely because she's a woman: as a daughter, she has no real status in her family and is simply waiting to be married off to the appropriate husband. She has asserted her 'independence' by insisting that her fiancé Akeem fund her business, a PR company of a type unique to Taiwan, basically a front organisation for a commercial conglomerate, designed to promote corporate interests and assign sponsorships. This type of operation is known in Taiwan as a 'Culture Company', an irony that resists translation. More easily grasped is the position of Molly's assistant Qiqi, a petite charmer with whom everyone falls in love at first sight. She has accordingly been snapped up to appear in commercials; the problem is that viewers remember her but not the product she's selling. Qiqi is conventionally happy, conventionally sincere and conventionally ambitious. So why, the film shows her asking herself, do other people insist on projecting their own problems on to the bland mask of her face?

None of these characters is based on an actual individual, but all of them are highly recognisable urban types, especially in Taipei. The key question in the months to come will be: to what extent will audiences beyond Taiwan relate to these characters and situations? Cannes, notoriously unreceptive to films that place demands of any kind on their audience and until recently proudly indifferent to most Asian cinema, doesn't strike me as the ideal place to answer the question. But the film has been acquired for Taiwan distribution by Warner Bros' new subsidiary Warner Asia, and it seems that the parent office in Burbank will oversee the foreign sales and international distribution. And so it probably won't be long before Yang finds out whether the syndromes he dissects are universal or purely local. My own guess is: universal.



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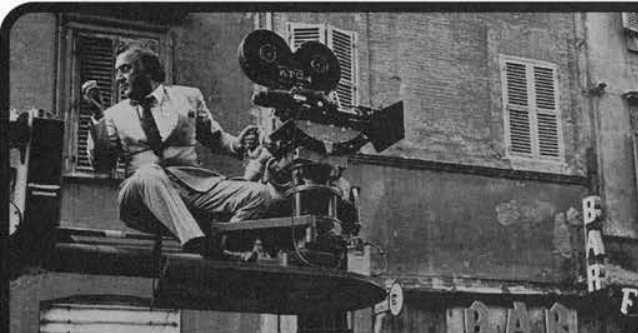
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A woman in black and white

I was an adolescent in post-Second World War Marseilles. The war had taken all the good things away. But now they were coming back: food, toys, children's magazines, films. Pleated scarlet satin and purple velvet covered entire walls of the renovated cinemas on the Canebière, the avenue that led to the busy port. Metres and metres of floor-length curtains swished and danced open as in the magic dark the first *court métrage* burst on screen.

Me and my friend Michèle and Michèle's mum (who was fun and loved boogie-woogie and owned dried sea-stars instead of ancestors' portraits as did my mum and dad, and whose sea captain of a husband was conveniently away most of the time – he came back every now and then with entire *régimes* of green bananas) went to the pictures every Thursday, which was French children's day off. We stayed for two full performances, from 2.00 pm to 6.00 pm. Technicolor. From *Aladdin* and *Ivanhoe* to *The Prisoner of Zenda* and *War and Peace*, I saw them all, and over the years I would spend each week from Thursday night to 2.00 pm the following Thursday madly in love with the hero of the last film I had seen. Gary Cooper, Kirk Douglas, Stewart Granger, Mel Ferrer, James Mason, later Marlon Brando and James Dean and, of course, best and most, Gérard Philipe – you name him and I wildly and elaborately fantasised about him. I was the maiden in distress, the seductress, the faithful wait-at-home princess. My scripts adapted to the hero's physique, the period and mode of the film. I was nothing if not inventive. So were my friends at our all-girls' school.

Face made for tragedy

Then came 17, real boys in a mixed college, severer politics. Culture descended on the provinces: an avant-garde cinema called the Paris, close to a street named Paradise, opened. I went with a new friend. Along with *La strada*, with Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*, there came the older films: *Wuthering Heights*, *Brief Encounter*, *Les Enfants du Paradis*, Renoir, Clair, Clément, Bresson. Suddenly there was a black and white world that took my breath away. It held a very different magic from Technicolor. Romance was now grown-up, savage. It killed, like the new colonial wars: the Algerian war was all over Marseilles. You no longer fantasised, you recognised. Black and white was real – or rather, it accepted the colouring of real dreams, those the night sends you, not those you weave out of the velvet and satin threads of the day.

True reality was black and white. If any colour seeped into it, it did so like draining blood, as in Resnais' *Night and Fog* with its rails that lead to death and its sea of shorn hair, all different, all mixed.

One actress took my heart, a buried part of it: Maria Casarès. Not the lovelorn woman of *Les Enfants du Paradis* (though she would have had to have gone through that, somewhere, sometime, wouldn't she?), but the passionate, powerful, vengeful lady in black of Bresson's *Ces dames du Bois de Boulogne*. Those black eyes. That unforget-

Matinees in Marseilles, and later the dark, proud features of Maria Casarès in Bresson and Cocteau, haunt the memory of novelist and writer Nicole Ward Jouve

table, deep, broken, thrilling voice I had also heard live at Vilar's Théâtre National Populaire which was touring the country and played in front of the Marseilles town hall to huge audiences. I loved the Diderot story Bresson had adapted, of the lady who tests her cooling lover, announcing to him that she no longer loves him. Instead of being afflicted he is overjoyed: he no longer loves her either. Yes, let's be friends, she says; and plans a terrible revenge. Casarès, with that face made for tragedy. Casarès in black – the same colouring for dress, eyes, hair. Light and shadow: that's what black and white films are made of.

Why did I like her so? For the same unknown reason, no doubt, that as a ten-year-old schoolgirl I had adored the 16-year-old with the hoarse, throaty voice who had played Racine's wicked queen Athalie to my angelic-little-boy's Joas. I had longed to play Athalie, not the boy. Casarès, the slim, black-suited figure of Death. Followed by her motorcyclists, she emerges from the shadow, keeps crossing the cobbled street of Cocteau's *Orphée*. Somewhere inside me that figure became associated with the handleless clock, the blank, featureless face of the old man's nightmares in *Wild Strawberries*. Dreams in black and white. "C'était pendant l'horreur d'une profonde nuit", Athalie's dream begins. Then her mother Jezebel appears. Predicts her death.

I lived and I forgot all that. But years later, my first novel had a wicked, vengeful hero-

ine called Mathilde. It was the name of a black-haired woman I knew. It is also the name of Stendhal's heroine in *The Scarlet and the Black* – the one who likes wearing mourning clothes and ends up with her lover's decapitated head. Still later, I wrote a novel called *L'Entremise*: the story of a beautiful woman who has sold her soul for eternal youth. One day her shadow catches up with her. The shadow, who looks the age the woman ought to be, is malicious. Pursues her relentlessly. She cannot be destroyed, and in the end the woman has to confront her. Integrate her.

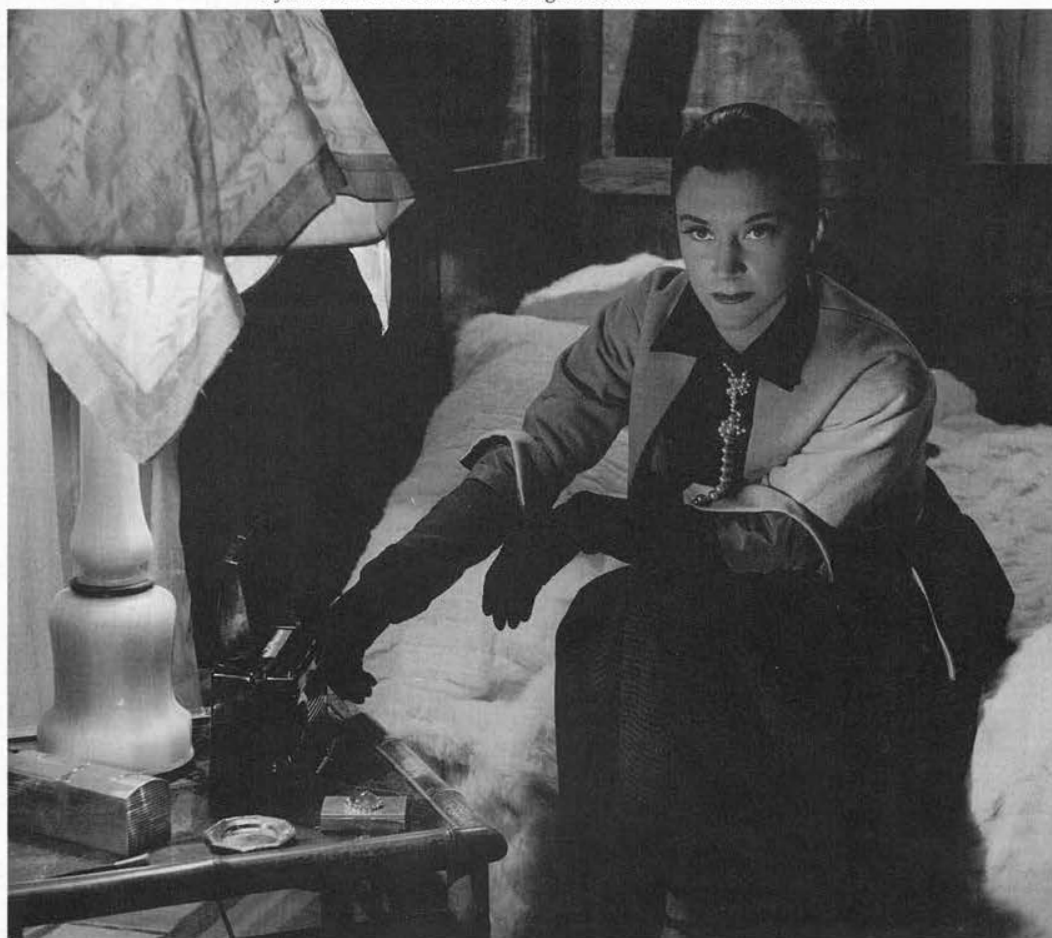
Dreams of a persecuting woman

I thought that story was far removed from me, as pure a piece of invention as I could manage. Until years later, I began to have dreams. Dreams of a persecuting woman. A woman in black. In a black suit, sometimes. A burglar, a terrorist. All liquid, lethal intent. She wants me dead. She is death incarnate. My shadow.

How the unconscious knows. And we don't. And it takes a lifetime to find out.

From all those years back, thank you, Maria Casarès, for having lent your proud features to the faceless clock, crossed the street that had to be crossed with your *grande dame* silhouette, spoken the words of repressed, of smouldering passion in your deep, vibrant, cracked voice.

Mythic. That's what those films in black and white were for me.



Darkness becomes her: Maria Casarès, who lent her features to the faceless clock, in Cocteau's 'Orphée'

BFI STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS

Accidental hero

Martin Walker

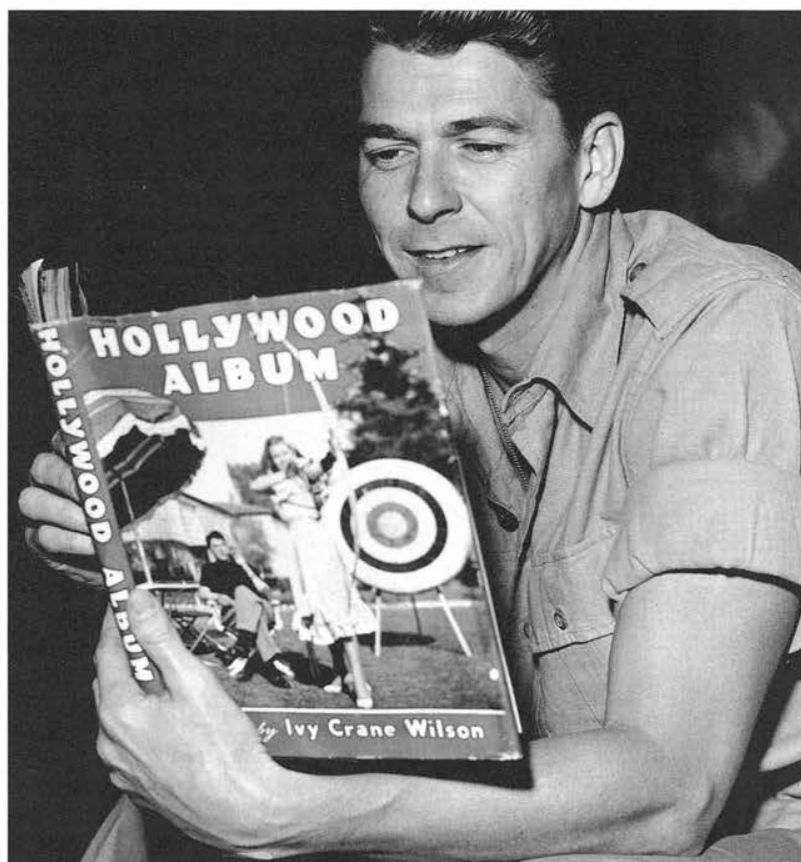
Ronald Reagan in Hollywood: Movies and Politics
Stephen Vaughn, Cambridge University Press, £19.95, 359pp

With touching solidarity, each of the men who had sat behind the lonely Oval Office desk turned up for the funeral of former president Richard Nixon at Yorba Linda. One of the most carefully planned events of that ritual was their slow and dignified parade to take their places. They arrived in order of their incumbency, a bizarre pageant of American memories. When Ronald Reagan came into view, the applause welled up, peaking as he and Nancy tottered to their seats. The applause lasted just long enough to allow George and Barbara Bush to take their places with dignity. But by the time President and Hillary Clinton appeared, an embarrassing silence had resumed.

Of course, this was Southern California, the heart of conservative Orange County, and after Nixon himself, Reagan remains the only Californian to have won the presidency. And most of those attending knew that this was a dress rehearsal for Reagan's own funeral, since he too has chosen California rather than Washington as his final resting place. But the fact remains that Reagan retains a special place in the affections of his fellow citizens. On the face of it, this is odd. The Iran-Contra conspiracy was at least as subversive of the US Constitution as Nixon's Watergate. Reagan's tax and welfare policies were far more socially divisive than those of Nixon. Reagan's open embrace of the plutocratic values of the decade of greed have given way to the puritanical sense of recessionary remorse which helped throw George Bush out of office.

Personal charm aside, the difference between these presidents – the only two since Eisenhower to be elected twice to the White House – was defined by Walter Bagehot in his study of the British monarchy. Reagan was able to fill the ceremonial and even mystical role of the presidency, even if he did not fulfil its executive function with Nixon's dutiful fervour. But Reagan was an actor, and as Professor Stephen Vaughn points out in this fascinating, if infuriating study of the politics and propaganda of Reagan's Hollywood years, of all American presidents and presidential candidates, only General Eisenhower would have been seen by more voters proudly wearing his country's uniform. Reagan's film career as a leading man also echoed that new role of the president as romantic hero and sex object pioneered by the young Jack Kennedy.

Reagan's Hollywood years were infused with the New Deal ideology of Franklin Roosevelt. In 1948, he campaigned for Roosevelt's successor, Harry Truman, organising Truman's Hollywood election rally with Lauren Bacall. In that same election season, campaigning for the liberal Hubert Humphrey, Reagan attacked his Republican opponent as "a banner carrier for Wall Street". In 1950, he campaigned for the Democratic Senate candidate Helen Douglas, who was to be defeated in a characteristically venomous red-baiting by the young Nixon. But by 1952, Reagan was backing the Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower.



At this point, Vaughn's book ends, without exploring Reagan's wilderness years, when he was reduced to being an MC for Las Vegas variety shows, before the General Electric public relations department and the television show *Red River Days* restored his fortunes. At times *Ronald Reagan in Hollywood* reads like a doctoral thesis on the Screen Actors Guild in the 40s. It does fill a particular gap in the Reagan biography, but one cannot help wanting more – some musings on the parallels between the political shifts in 40s Hollywood and those during the Reagan presidency, for instance, which saw the macho heroics of *Rambo* and the 'Star Wars' crusade against another Evil Empire replace the liberal thrust of the 60s and 70s.

After an exhaustive study of the 40s films, the available memoirs and contemporary documents, Vaughn concludes that Reagan's political conversion had two main roots. The first was the fear of Communism, the witch-hunts of Senator McCarthy and Congressman Nixon and the House Un-American Activities Committee. As president of the Screen Actors Guild during a bitter Hollywood strike, Reagan not only fought Communist influence in the Guild, but became a confidential source for the FBI. This was just like the movies. The films with which Reagan made his name in 1938-40 were as Secret Agent J-24, working for the US Treasury.

He starred in four unusually successful B movies – *Secret Service of the Air*, which portrayed him as an undercover man infiltrating a gang smuggling illegal Mexican aliens into the US, *Code of the Secret Service* and *Smashing the Money Ring*, in which he played the same agent on the track of counterfeiters, and *Murder in the Air*, where he hunted down Nazi spies intent on stealing the secret of the "inertia projector". In the right hands, this was "the greatest peace argu-

ment ever invented". The subsequent incarnation of the inertia projector, President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, was promoted in precisely the same terms.

The second root of Reagan's political transformation was his own rationalisation that it was not he who had changed, but the defining centre of American politics. For Reagan, the New Deal in the 30s and Roosevelt's leadership against the fascist powers in the Second World War embodied the 'Americanism' in which he believed. With the Cold War, the focus of this Americanism shifted to the Republicans. In 1951, while still nominally a member of the liberal Americans for Democratic Action, Reagan went to Fulton, Missouri, scene of Churchill's famous 'Iron Curtain' speech, to deliver an address which expressed the core of his political faith. It was repeated three decades later during his presidency: "America is less a place than an idea, an idea that has been deep in the souls of men ever since man started his long trail from the swamps, the inherent love of freedom. I, in my own mind, have thought of America as a place in the divine scheme of things that was set aside as a promised land."

There were other factors at work in Reagan's political shift. The movie industry itself was in crisis, with US theatre attendances falling as television began to make inroads. And Reagan's career was in trouble: Warner Bros, his employers throughout his Hollywood career, refused his pleas to cast him as a cowboy hero and restricted him to roles as an ageing matinee idol and character actor.

Above all, Warner Bros themselves had undergone a parallel political journey – from staunch Republicans to New Dealers to passionate advocates of US support for Britain against Hitler. Reagan was drafted into this campaign, flying for the RAF in the Battle of Britain in *International Squadron*

Just like the movies:
Ronald Reagan's film career mirrored his political conversion from Democrat to Republican

and co-starring with Errol Flynn in another RAF movie, *Desperate Journey*.

During the Second World War, Warner Bros arranged for Reagan to run the new Army Air Corps Motion Picture Unit, producing training films, newsreels and propaganda for the home front. After the war, the studio was besieged by strikes and Jack Warner fired anyone he suspected of being a Communist. In spite of his flirtation with liberalism, Reagan was never really a suspect. As he told his local paper, the *Des Moines Sunday Register*, when he set off for Hollywood in 1937: "It's a tough racket, but when you consider the rewards you're shooting at - fame such as couldn't be won in any other profession and wealth that mounts to dizzying heights - it's worth the chances you take." Substitute "power" for "wealth" and Reagan's ambitions in the 80s had not changed much since his all-American youth. His genius was that he persuaded people that actually he never had to change at all.

Snuffed out

Kim Newman

Killing for Culture: An Illustrated History of Death Film from Mondo to Snuff

David Kerekes and David Slater, Creation Books, £10.95, 353pp

With its grainy, video-degraded colour cover image, taken from Mario Morra's *Savage Zone*, of a severed head being carried by its hair, *Killing for Culture* is not a book to read on the tube. People tend to look askance at those who show an interest in such deviant subject matter as the sensationalising of death, particularly in the visual media. Even more than hardcore pornography, the capturing of 'real' death on film is a subject that overturns accepted notions of 'entertainment', 'art' and 'information', making us uncomfortable about our motives in watching.

Moral panics have arisen around a variety of graphic representations of death - in the news, for example, or when news footage of real death is used in fictional contexts (as in the 1968 Monkees film *Head*, which includes found footage from the Vietnam war). At the more disreputable end of the scale are those mock or actual documentaries which feature violent death (though the authors of *Killing for Culture* convincingly demonstrate that footage purporting to show real death in the 'mondo' cycle of shockumentaries is faked) and the persistent but so far unsubstantiated idea of the snuff film, in which torture murders supposedly are filmed for the delectation of the depraved rich. Despite claims by the British police that they have successfully raided snuff dealers, the retrieved items invariably turn out to be the tired Italian cannibal and zombie movies at the centre of the early 80s video nasties furore.

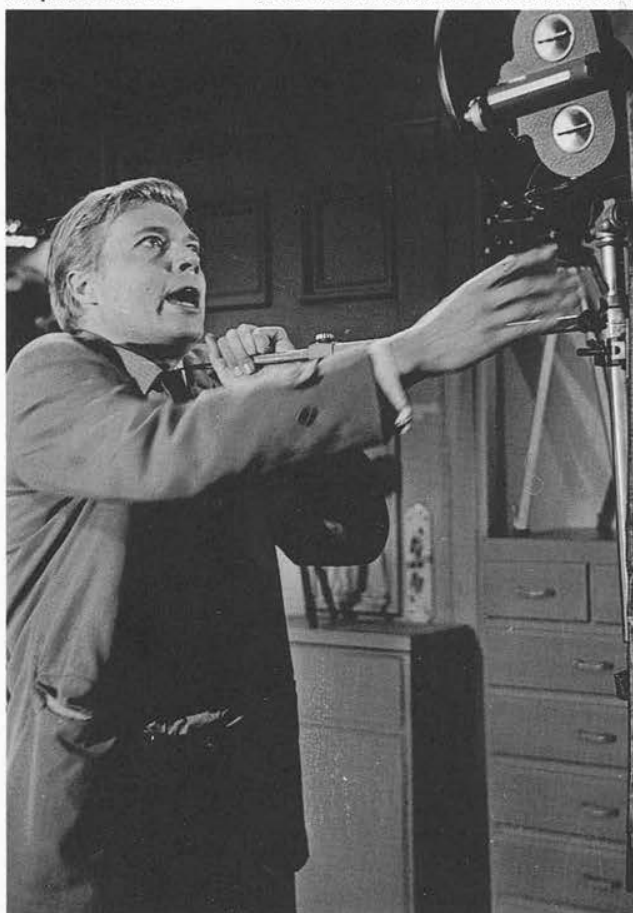
In the late twentieth century, when almost everything can be captured on tape, it is self-evident that killings must have been filmed at least as often as hurricanes, childbirth or pratfalls. It is generally assumed that it is easy to judge the motive and purpose behind such activity, but closer examination proves this to be far from true. Do news broadcasts of bombed cities seen from the point of view of the

bomber (as with the Gulf war, for example) qualify as snuff? And what is the difference between the use of actual concentration camp footage in Stanley Kramer's *Judgment at Nuremberg* or Sam Fuller's *Verboten!* and the 1976 horror movie *Nightmare in Blood*?

Kerekes and Slater trace the concept of the snuff movie back to Ed Sanders' book *The Family*, published in 1976, which relates (and possibly invents) the apocryphal story that Charles Manson and his followers made filmed records of their murders. The snuff movie subsequently became an urban legend. There is, of course, a philosophical precursor in Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960), in which a murderer obtains sexual gratification from filming his female victims as they die, but the idea that there might be a lucrative market for films of real killings seems to have entered public consciousness through the unethical but enterprising activities of distributor Allan Shackleton, who suggested in 1976 that *Snuff*, a Manson exploitationer shot in Argentina in 1971, contained footage of an actual murder of a woman. Shackleton went so far as to make anonymous complaints to the police about his own movie and then spurred on feminist groups to organise protests. He failed to realise that the torture and killing of a woman presented as erotic spectacle is a sensitive issue whether the incident is staged or real.

The primitive desire to watch killing, whether of humans or animals, runs deep in all societies. But part of the appeal of the idea of snuff, as with hardcore pornography, lies in the undecidability of the question "Is it fake?" Arguably, this uncertainty hovering around the boundaries of reality is as troublesome to moral guardians as the legal or ethical questions. Kerekes and Slater are less concerned with such theoret-

Watching death at work: Michael Powell's 'Peeping Tom', the acceptable face of snuff



ical issues than with mapping a critically neglected area, with the result that their listing of the contents of dozens of the sons of *Mondo cane*, which inaugurated the cycle in 1962, tends to become tedious. But at least their book stands as a definitive study. Carol Clover's readable and thought-provoking *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (BFI Publishing, 1993), which goes some way towards refuting the simplistic notions of identification on which much antipathy towards slasher movies is based, is marred by a lack of broad knowledge of her chosen area. Kerekes and Slater have clearly spent their lives in front of the video recorder, and each point is substantiated by their wide viewing of arcana.

The problem with any such enterprise is narrowing down the field to manageable proportions. *Killing for Culture* is anchored by mondo and snuff, thoroughly examining both traditions and picking apart the myths surrounding the latter. As well as assessing extreme examples of mondo such as the notorious *Faces of Death* series, which consists of montages of people in the throes of painful death, and examining various intimations of snuff in (typically inaccurate) newspaper kerfuffles about 'video nasties' or 'satanic child abuse', the authors look at more mainstream examples of the death film in features such as *Peeping Tom* (a rare attempt to explain why anyone might make or watch a snuff movie), *Cannibal Holocaust* (an elaboration on the horror stories about the making of mondo movies), and *Hardcore* (which deploys all the apocryphal paraphernalia in its snuff movie sub-plot).

Given the deplorable self-indulgence of much writing by aficionados, in which attitude often takes the place of ideas, it is refreshing that Kerekes and Slater steer a careful course between curiosity and prurience. They are clearly enthralled enough by their subject to endure a great deal of extremely unpleasant material, but they have not been entirely won over by it. In the end, *Killing for Culture* admits a human fascination with filmed death while finding it regrettable. Some of the films discussed, such as Stan Brakhage's *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes*, confront mortality as well as address the riddle of at what point a filmed event becomes art, information or entertainment. But the likes of *Faces of Death* or *Snuff* do little more than cash in on death with tabloid glee - and one wonders how much of the newspapers' ranting at video violence comes from a self-righteous desire to justify their own sensationalised crime or war horror stories.

Child's play

Angela McRobbie

Reading Audiences: Young People and the Media
David Buckingham (ed), Manchester University Press, £35 (hb), £12.99 (pb), 223pp

Out of the Garden: Toys and Children's Culture in the Age of TV Marketing

Stephen Kline, Verso, £19.95, 406pp

In spite of the substantial amount of relatively reassuring research about the viewing habits of young people, the phrase "children and television" still triggers a rising spiral of moral panic. No research has ever directly identified the supposedly dam-

◀ aging effects of watching television, yet it is at TV and, increasingly, video that the finger of the tabloid press is pointed following such events as the terrible murder of James Bulger. The demonisation of video seems to be a convenient way of deflecting anxieties about the state of our society and the erosion of social responsibility in an era of rampant individualism. Television and the high-street video shop are made to bear the burden of our collective shame.

In *Reading Audiences*, David Buckingham brings together articles which, though posing widely different questions, share a common agenda in refusing to endorse either of the current trends in audience analysis. The authors reject the image of young people as vulnerable viewers unable to make their own decisions about what they see. But neither do they go the post-modern route of granting children complete autonomy over the meanings they create. Watching television is neither a matter of being programmed, nor a cultural free-for-all.

The question of audiences has come to occupy a key place in contemporary media and cultural studies, reflecting a shift away from textuality and the decline of 'Screen theory'. The close analysis of images has given way to a more sociological approach, and academic researchers are now more interested in how people watch, and how what they watch feeds into the rest of their lives. Buckingham's introduction to *Reading Audiences* signals these debates from the perspective of media studies, while his conclusion adopts that of cultural studies. The former identifies the notion of "real audiences" as the methodological focus, but in the cultural studies section television is placed in the broader context of everyday life and the "common culture" of young people. Here Buckingham draws on the influential work of Raymond Williams on the "ordinariness" of culture and people's ability to form their own identities. And he looks to Paul Willis on the creativity of young people as they transform television symbols and narratives into their own youth culture.

The different emphases pinpoint the dilemma of television studies. On one hand, close attention has to be paid to the interface of the screen and its images with young viewers. At the same time, since television is omnipresent, overseeing so many of our waking (and even sleeping) hours, representing 'company' for the old or lonely, warmth and conviviality after a hard day's work, fun, familiarity and enjoyment for children, and cheap pleasure for the unemployed, it is difficult to draw the line between television and everyday life. In a sense, it has become our common culture, the privileged channel of 'our' national identity – the uproar over Torvill and Dean's failure to win Olympic gold was, after all, a television-inspired protest. Television frames and contains difference and diversity and provides networks for sustaining local cultures while also enabling access to global connections and communications. This means that studying television becomes synonymous with studying 'society', a tall order when the old, reliable signs of class, sex and ethnicity are realigning themselves before our very eyes.

The articles in this collection attempt to hold on to the solid ground of ethnographic observation and analysis and to



Children's hour: John Huston's 'Annie' plays a significant role in the everyday life of a dysfunctional family

foreground certain questions, such as gender, in relation to children watching television. Marie Gillespie's excellent account of video film watching in a Southall Hindu family also considers ethnicity and cultural identity. In this article, detailed participant observation by a sensitive and imaginative researcher over a three-year period has paid off – the results add significantly to debates about the vexed question of what cultural identity actually means.

Gillespie considers the viewing, in all its everyday complexity, of 'god films' in the Dhani household. She shows how the mother "treats herself" to watching these religious films, finding solace in them, especially when illness or other problems affect the family. Television constructs the reality of domestic worship, and with it the rituals typically associated with public worship. (This experience is not unique to the Asian population: my mother, a devout Catholic, used to make my sisters and myself kneel, eyes downcast, in front of the TV whenever the pope appeared dispensing the papal blessing from Rome.) Gillespie is perceptive about the consumption of television programmes by the young people of the Dhani family: "In both [Indian and British] contexts young people use TV to negotiate issues of cultural identity and difference. However, these reservoirs of knowledge and experience... are neither mutually exclusive nor necessarily oppositional but interact with, support and condition each other."

Gender ethnographies also provide rich material. Buckingham's analysis of young boys talking about masculinity through the shared experience of watching TV indicates the complex reactions which contribute to the process of learning to be male. Fear of disapproval or ridicule from other boys is

accompanied by a retrenchment into defensive masculinity, along with emotional investment in the images of power, pleasure and excitement that are offered as rewards for struggling to take up a strong male position in culture. The emotions also figure prominently in Valerie Walkerdine's contribution, whose Foucauldian perspective seems at odds with the more empirically grounded research. It is precisely this methodological openness which needs to be defended in the current arguments about children and television.

Walkerdine's account of the role of the 1981 film *Annie* in the troubled psychic life of an abused girl in an abused family offers a fragment for further thinking. This piece raises some problematic questions about television research in 'disturbed' families. I felt that Walkerdine glossed over the terrible reality of abuse in order to avoid, in the context of research, further pathologising the family, who had already been the focus of social service intervention. Walkerdine sees this as regulation and judgment, and her concern is with the psychic pain of the whole family, rather than just the abused mother and daughter. Within this context, the girl Eliana projects on to the figure of orphan Annie, the mother vociferously denies her own resemblance to the drunken Miss Hannigan, and the entire dysfunctional family – from the father who buys the video for the children, but who is also the abuser, to the girl who quietly absorbs its escapist story as her own – participates in the dynamics of the narrative.

Stephen Kline's *Out of the Garden* also takes a multi-methodological approach. His argument is that television has replaced children's play. In this dense and scholarly study of television as 'toys', which, like *Reading Audiences*, also draws on detailed empirical work, Kline considers the role of 'brand' characters in North American children's TV, the narrative situations which trigger (or even programme) children's imaginations and, most importantly, the connection between these figures and the products they sell in the huge children's market. Kline's approach echoes the cultural pessimism of the Frankfurt School in the way it pits the giants of marketing against informed, socially conscious parents, educators and activists. However, Kline by no means simply endorses the 'harm done' argument; rather, he places the children's culture industries and their marketing strategies within a political and social framework. Nevertheless, he sees our inability to limit the power of consumer culture, which puts profits above everything, as a failing: "The marketplace will never inspire children with high ideals or positive images of the personality, provide stories which help them to adjust to life's tribulations or promote play activities that are most help to their maturation."

This is to see television as a seamless, monolithic unity with no spaces or openings for lively, intelligent people (including parents) to work inside it. The problem is that television today is as fragmented as society itself. Nor does 'childhood' represent the unity it once did. The strength of these new audience studies is that they register changes in our ideas about children and the dynamic, contradictory and sometimes exasperatingly unpredictable power of images.

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REVIEWS

Sight and Sound publishes a review, detailed synopsis and comprehensive credits for each feature film theatrically distributed in the United Kingdom, together with TV films from the Screen One/Two and Film on Four series. With this issue, we have rearranged the film credits to make them more coherent and easier to use. The order of the credits is conventional and is not intended to reflect any hierarchy of importance in a film's personnel.

The credits are arranged in several blocks according to general type. These are: Production – all production details, listing production companies and crew; Script; Photography; Video and Special Visual Effects; Animation (if applicable); Editing; Design, Wardrobe and Make-Up; Music; Sound; Consultants and Specialists. A strict template for job descriptions is used wherever possible, but may vary with certain films. This is particularly the case with sound credits, which are especially prone to variation; in these cases, the job description is given as supplied in the original film credits. Credits that have been added to the list, starting this issue, are Continuity, Script Editing and Script Consultant. The section 'Songs/Music Extracts' now covers all music extracts, regardless of genre.

All technical specifications – including black-and-white/colour, and Dolby stereo – are now listed at the end of the credits. The term 'anamorphic' covers all films photographed in anamorphic process (e.g. CinemaScope, Panavision). Unless otherwise indicated, the date given for a film is the film's year of copyright.

The Adventures of Huck Finn

USA 1993

Director: Stephen Sommers

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Walt Disney Pictures

A Mighty Miss

production

In association with

Steve White Productions

Executive Producers

Barry Bernardi

Steve White

Producer

Laurence Mark

Co-producer

John Baldecchi

Associate Producer

Llewellyn Wells

Production Co-ordinator

Lisa Lynn Kearsley

Unit Production Manager

Llewellyn Wells

Location Manager

Robbie Goldstein

Assistant Directors

Howard Ellis

Kevin Barry Howe

Darryl Frank

Casting

Mary Goldberg

Associate:

Amy Lippens

ADR Voice:

Loop Therapy

Screenplay

Stephen Sommers

Based on the novel *The*

Adventures of Huckleberry

Finn by Mark Twain

Script Supervisor

Sylvie Chesneau

Director of Photography

Janusz Kaminski

Camera Operator

Mauro Fiore

Editor

Bob Ducsay

Production Designer

Richard Sherman

Art Director

Randy Moore

Set Design

Keith Neely

Set Decorator

Michael Wurga

Set Dresser

Nicola Hewitt

Scenic Artist

Paul Oliver

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Roy H. Arbogast

Costume Design

Betsy Faith Heimann

Costume Supervisor

Joan Thomas

Make-up Artist

Coree Lear

Hairstylist

Vicky Phillips

Title Design

Judith Kahn Inc.

Moving Impressions

Illustrations:

Jody Winger

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

Bill Conti

Orchestrations

Jack Eskew

Music Editors

Steve Livingston

Ken Johnson

Supervising Sound Editor

Fred Judkins

Sound Editors

Ed Bannon

Richard Corwin

Edward Fassel

David Lee Hagberg

Philip A. Hess

Robert Sephton

Chris Welch

Production Sound Mixer

Steve Aaron

ADR Mixer

Doc Kane

Foley Mixer

Marilyn Graf

Music Mixer

Lee DeCarlo

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Rick Ash

Dean Z. Zupancic

Foley Artists

Catherine Harper

Osama Khuluki

Stunt Co-ordinator

Ben R. Scott

Cast

Elijah Wood

Huck Finn

Courtney B. Vance

Jim

Robbie Coltrane

The Duke

Jason Robards

The King

Ron Perlman

Pap Finn

Dana Ivey

Widow Douglas

Anne Heche

Mary Jane Wilks

James Gammon

Deputy Hines

Paxton Whitehead

Harvey Wilks

Tom Aldredge

Dr Robinson

Laura Bundy

Susan Wilks

Curtis Armstrong

Country Jake

Mary Louise Wilson

Miss Watson

Frances Conroy

Scrawny Shanty Woman

Daniel Tamborelli

Ben Rodgers

Denman Anderson

Book Worm

Mickey Cassidy

Bully

Alex Zuckerman

Joe Rodgers

Marian Zinser

Levi Bell

Renee O'Connor

Julia Wilks

Leon Russon

Shanty Woman's

Husband

Garette Ratliff Henson

Billy Grangerford

Richard Anders

Colonel Grangerford

Elaine Fjellman

Miss Sophie

Grangerford

Janet Shea

Mother Grangerford

Jay R. Unger

Sirus

Dion Anderson

Sheriff

Paul Kropff

Campfire Man

Mark Allen Branson

William Wilks

John Henry Scott

Abe Turner

Hoskins Deterly

Curmudgeon

Mike Watson

Joe Turner

Gary Lee Davis

Ben R. Scott

Fighting Men

Russell Paul Parkerson

Fishing Boy

Kimberly Latrice Hall

Louise

Paul Dewees

Auctioneer

Evelyn B. Bunch

Jingo Lady

9,692 feet

108 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Technicolor

Mississippi, the mid-nineteenth century. Huck Finn learns his drunken, brutal father is back in town. He makes plans to run away from his guardians, the Widow Douglas and her sister Miss Watson, before Pap can find him, but delays his departure for too long. Pap breaks into the Widow's house and kidnaps him, taking him to a cabin deep in the woods.

Huck escapes through the chimney, feigns his own death and goes into hiding. Soon, he bumps into Jim, one of Miss Watson's slaves. Rather than be sold to a New Orleans slave trader and separated from his family, Jim has scarpered. He swears Huck to secrecy. Scouting for provisions, Huck learns that Jim is being blamed for his supposed murder. The two head down the river on a raft. Their plan is to travel to a 'free' state. After various adventures, they are waylaid by a pair of mountebanks, the Duke and the King, who recognise Jim from posters and threaten to turn him into the authorities unless he co-operates.

Hoping to swindle the Wilks family out of their inheritance, the Duke and the King pretend to be the long-lost brothers of the recently deceased Peter Wilks. They also double-cross Jim, turning him in for a \$400 reward. But their schemes soon founder. Huck tells Mary Jane Wilks, the oldest daughter, that they are con artists. After the real Wilks brothers turn up, they end up being tarred and feathered. In the ensuing chaos, Huck manages to free Jim from the jail. Together, the two flee from the irate townsfolk. In sight on a paddle steamer which would take them to safety, Huck is shot. Jim stays behind to nurse him. He is recaptured, and is about to be lynched by the posse, but Mary Jane comes to his rescue.

Huck is nursed back to health, and

Jim is given his freedom. Rather than go back to living with Widow Douglas, Huck runs off into the wilds.

"All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*," Ernest Hemingway once proclaimed, but the qualities which make the novel so important do not translate readily to film. *Huckleberry Finn* is, above all, a masterpiece of the vernacular: its use of slang and dialect, and its choice of a raw country boy as hero and narrator, went a long way towards freeing American fiction from the constraints of English literary language. Its studied roughness is well-nigh impossible to match in cinematic terms.

Not that this has stopped the filmmakers trying. *Huckleberry Finn* was first adapted for the screen back in 1920, and has been a staple of American cinema and TV ever since. Twain's radical formal innovations have long since been taken for granted, and the book is nowadays regarded as the kids' adventure *par excellence*: natural territory, in other words, for Disney, the latest to exhume the story.

The Disney version may stick closer to the original narrative than most of its predecessors, but at times it risks embalming Twain's fable by treating it with the same fussy reverence as the BBC in their Jane Austen adaptations. Painstaking care is taken to make the costumes and settings historically accurate and to avoid anachronism. There are no bottles on display (in Twain's time, glass factories were thin on the ground) and characters smoke pipes, not cigarettes.

In its casting, at least, *The Adventures of Huck Finn* also errs on the sentimental side. Following in the footsteps of Jackie Coogan and Mickey Rooney as



Huckleberry hounded: Elijah Wood

Huck comes the 11-year-old Elijah Wood. A curly headed waif who wouldn't look out of place in a Pears Soap advertisement, the young actor, like his more celebrated avatars, is simply too cute to make a convincing backwoods boy. His relationship with Jim, the runaway slave (played with appropriate dignity by Courtney B. Vance) is so coyly handled that the film's message about racial tolerance ends up seeming saccharine and condescending, more in the manner of Harriet Beecher Stowe than of Mark Twain.

Still, this is certainly a handsome-looking picture, bolstered by fine location photography. As if acknowledging the impossibility of emulating Twain's storytelling style, the script makes only sparing use of first-person voice-over, instead relying on the visuals to propel the narrative. These are frequently quite spectacular. Night-time storms, huge paddle steamers crashing into rafts, sunken ships, fog and fire all contribute to the atmospheric intensity. Director Stephen Sommers shows a deft hand in the action sequences (at one stage, he even wryly parodies *The Wild Bunch*, staging a rousing, slow-motion shoot-out between two feuding Southern families). The film may start in slightly pedestrian key, but once Jim and Huck's epic journey by raft gets under way, it soon picks up momentum, managing to remind us in the process that Twain's story can be read as a precursor of twentieth-century American 'road' fiction, with the Mississippi standing in for the great American freeway.

Given the way that Jim and Huck are sentimentalised, it is scarcely surprising that the supporting cast end up stealing the film. Wizenod doctors, acerbic widows, bullies, bookworms, curmudgeons and scrawny men and women are featured, all with striking physiognomies and quirks to match. Jason Robards and Robbie Coltrane, working in tandem like a well-oiled vaudeville act, offer a zestful, hugely enjoyable comic turn as the two mountebanks, King and Duke. Robards, an older statesman of stage and screen generally noted for his gravitas, is allowed to indulge his sense of the ridiculous for a change. Masquerading as an English gentleman, he adopts a cockney accent so exaggerated it would make Dick Van Dyke blanch. And Coltrane, pretending to be his deaf younger brother, shows Oliver Hardy-like dexterity as he develops his own flamboyant variety of sign language.

After these two are tarred and feathered and kicked out of town, the film simply drifts to a mawkish, stilted conclusion. In the end, its greatest failing is the way it lapses into cosy moralising. Twain prefaced his novel with the following injunction: "Notice: Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot." It wasn't one that Disney were ever going to pay heed to.

Geoffrey Macnab

The Air Up There

USA 1993

Director: Paul M. Glaser

Certificate
PG
Distributor
Buena Vista
Production Companies
Hollywood Pictures presents
An Interscope Communications/
PolyGram Filmed Entertainment production
In association with Nomura Babcock & Brown Unit One Film Partners
Longview Entertainment
Executive Producers
Lance Hool
Scott Kroopf
Producers
Ted Field
Rosalie Swedlin
Robert W. Cort
Co-producer
Conrad Hool
Line Producer
Vancouver: William Teitler
Production Co-ordinators
Mick Dalrymple
South Africa: Alison Ellard
Samantha Putter
Christopher Hool
Kenya: Lissa Ruben
Canada: Mara Grace McSweeney
Heather Meehan
Erin Smith
Production Managers
Michael Games
Kenya: Marie Louise Detrie
Canada: Joseph Patrick Finn
Justis Greene
Unit Production Manager
Conrad Hool
Location Managers
Warren Bader
Kenya: Robin Hollister
Canada: Keith Large
Rino Pace
Post-production Supervisor
Beccie Hilliard
2nd Unit Director
Lance Hool
Assistant Directors
Martin Walters
Tom Quinn
South Africa: Neil Johnson
Konga Mbandu
Mike Motsogi
Donald Ferguson
Christopher Hool
Kenya: John Chavanga
Lenny Juma
Daniel Kiarie
Billy Mwangole
Canada: Andrew Shea
Anne-Marie Ferney
Megan Banning
Mick Mackay
Collin Leadlay
Bonnie Benwick
Casting
Mali Finn
Donn Finn
Associate: Emily Schweber
South Africa: Moonyeen Lee
Kenya: Konga Mbandu
Canada: Stuart Aikins
Screenplay
Max Apple

Script Supervisors
Mimi Wolch
South Africa: Natalie Fletcher
Weibena Berrington
Canada: Jean Bereziuk
Directors of Photography
Dick Pope
Vancouver: Elliot Davis
2nd Unit Director of Photography
James Robb
Camera Operators
Chris Squires
2nd Unit: Hans Kehler
Harmon Cusack
Canada: David Crone
Rod Parkhurst
Steadicam Operators
Chris Squires
Toronto: David Crone
Editor
Michael E. Polakow
Production Designers
Roger Hall
Vancouver: Brent Thomas
Art Directors
Leith Ridley
Hans van der Zanden
Toronto: Alicia Keywan
Set Decorators
Karen Mary Brookes
Canada: Steve Shewchuk
Marianne Kaplan
Set Dressers
Shane Bunce
Kenya: Lulu Archer
Special Effects
Co-ordinators
Martin Malivoire
W. A. Andrew
Scythorpe
Special Effects
Taylors
Animal Prosthetics
Robbie Guess
Joel Rault
Costume Design
Hope Hanafin
Costume Supervisors
Grant Carr
Canada: Michele Harney
Make-up Artists
Gabriella Molnar
Canada: Irene Kent
Sandy Cooper
Hairstylists
Dee Eybers
Canada: Jennifer Bower
Ian Ballard
Title Design
Nina Saxon Film Design
Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title
Music/Orchestrations
David Newman
Music Supervisors
Sharon Boyle
Barklie K. Griggs
Music Editor
Lise Richardson
Music Co-ordinator
Richard Henderson
Songs
"Washington Post" by John Phillip Sousa, performed by The Stateside Marching Band; "St. Joseph's Alma Mater" by Brock Walsh; "Ukhulum! Izindaba" by Bigboy J. Thusi, "Jive Mabone" by Rupert Bopape, Edmund Piliso, "Ifa Lenkosana" by Lilian Zondi, performed by The Mahotella Queens; "Indoda Yejazi Elimnyama" by West Nkosi, performed by Amaswazi Emvelo; "Tana Kamina", "Mohva" by Solly Mambasa, Freddie Mukhari, Gezoni Mathubela, performed by Nkuku & Jopie Sisters; "Reunion/Reunion II/Reunion III" by Airtto Moreira, Mickey Hart, Flora Purim, Bobby Vega, performed by Mickey Hart, Airtto, Flora Purim; "Jamoko Wange Tek" by Daniel Owino Misiani, performed by D.O.7 Shiriti Jazz; "Ngicabange Ngaqeda" by Nobesuthu Shawe, performed by Malakhini and The Makgonatsohle Band; "Chobolo" by and performed by Spokes Mashiyane; "Higher & Higher" by Gary Jackson, Carl Smith, Raynard Miner, performed by The Mint Juleps; "Watch Me Fly" by Matthew Wilder, performed by Matthew Wilder, The African Air Ensemble
Sound Design
Soundelux
Supervising Sound Editor
Michael D. Wilhoit
Dialogue Editors
Stuart Copley
Glenn T. Morgan
Dino DiMuro
Supervising ADR Editor
Joe Mayer
ADR Editor
Jimmy Ling
Foley Editors
Barney Cabral
Owe Manny
Sound Mixers
David Lee
Canada: Mark Holden
Foley Mixer
David Gertz
Music Mixer
Tim Boyle
Sound Re-recording Mixers
Richard Portman
Mark Smith
Anna Behlmer
Sound Effects Editors
Jay B. Richardson
Randy Kelly
Foley Artists
Jeffrey Wilhoit
Jim Moriana
Basketball Technical Adviser
Bob McAdoo
Stunt Co-ordinators
Gary Jensen
Craig Ginsberg
Stunt Double
Kevin Bacon:
Craig Ginsberg
Basketball Double
Kevin Bacon:
James LaBrie
Basketball Trainers
John J. Salerano
Steve Lavin

Cast
Kevin Bacon
Jimmy Dolan
Charles Gitonga Maina
Saleh
Yolanda Vazquez
Sister Susan
Winston Ntshona
Urudu
Mabutho "Kid" Sithole
Nyaga
Sean McCann
Ray Fox
Dennis Patrick
Father O'Hara
Ilo Mutombo
Mifundo
Nigel Miguel
Halawi
Eric Menyuk
Mark Collins
Keith Gibbs
Buddy Wilson
Miriam Owiti
Beisa
Douglas Leboyare
Ikedo
Francis Mutei
St George
Gibson Gathu Mbugua
Harimbo
Vusi Kunene
Ntuko
Connie Chiume
Mrs Urudu
John Matshikiza
Mingori Mining Company Clerk
Ken Gampu
Itumbo
Fanyana H. Sidumo
Lilo
Peter Khubeke
Mimo
Salathiel Maake
Dahwi
Jomo Lwarami
Bodyguard
John Lesley
Banquet Emcee
Wendell Brereton
Falconer Abraham
St Joseph's Players
Dennis Orina
Ruwalla
Danstan Ojoo
Sololo
Peter Kigadi
Benson Rateng
Opozos
Bright Tjatji
Winabi Boy
Ramolao Makhene
Pawn Broker
George Owino Odhiambo
Robert Otieno Omole
Fredrick Omondi Okumu
Benjamin Iraya
Daniel Otieno Oketch
Stanley Murandah
Morris Aluanga
Zolote Mtinkulu
Solomon Mashiane
Jackson P. Mkwana
Mingori Team
Frans Matome Matloga
Lincoln M. Letsoalo
Referees

9,671 feet
107 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor

Kenya, Dolan spots Saleh playing on a makeshift basketball court. Dolan sets out to the remote Winabi district; on the way, he meets Nyaga, owner of the Mingori copper mine, which has its own well-drilled ball team and star player, Mafundo. Halawu, Saleh's elder brother, works for Nyaga as driver and factotum.

On reaching the Winabi, Dolan tires to persuade Saleh's father, Chief Urudu, to allow his son to join St Joe's. Sister Susan, O'Hara's assistant, disapproves of Dolan's mission. Saleh is tempted by Dolan's offer of a basketball scholarship, but he has duties to his tribe as his father's heir. Saleh explains that Nyaga is stealing the Winabi cattle and forcing them off their land; he tells him how Halawi had gone to the mine owner to reason for his tribe and had been subsequently disowned by Urudu. At the wedding of Saleh's sister Beisa, Nyaga's men attack and burn the Winabi village. Urudu visits Nyaga in the town and proposes a bet: a ball game between the Winabi and Mingori. If Nyaga's town wins, he will get the Winabi land. If the Winabi win, Nyaga will leave the tribe in peace.

Dolan begins training a Winabi team, but when point guard St George is injured, Urudu insists that Dolan himself play. He must first undergo Winabi initiation rites. Dolan agrees and the match day arrives. When Dolan is injured by Mifundo, Halawi steps in. The Winabi win within seconds of the final whistle. Back in the US, Saleh steps onto the St Joseph's court for the first game, followed by Dolan, now chief coach.

Although the fictional Winabi territory is a long way from the OK Corral, *The Air Up There* has at heart the structure of a Western. Dolan is the stranger who orchestrates the survival of the Winabi tribe, and although the final shoot-out is held on a basketball court, the goodies and baddies seem clearly delineated.

The Air Up There was written by Max Apple, who as a professor at Rice University presumably has first-hand knowledge of the pressure that colleges face to succeed in the stadium, in addition to recognising that sport provides the United States with their most prevalent cultural ritual. To become the consummate hero, Dolan has to shed the hustling persona of the college coach and recognise that life can be more important than a ball game. However, it is the underlying meaning of ritual that provides Apple's script with a dynamic as gripping as the film's overt action. The real voyage that Dolan makes is not his literal journey to Africa, but his transition from an individual player to a member of a tribe where his actions take place in a larger social context.

His key moment comes near the end of a gruelling initiation ritual which involves physical hardship and skill. Standing on top of a mountain, he throws his championship ring - previously a prized item, not for sale at any price - into the wilderness below. It

Jimmy Dolan's job as assistant basketball coach at St Joseph's College is in the balance after he fails to sign Buddy Wilson to the team. At an alumni dinner, chief coach Ray Fox announces his imminent retirement; Dolan has two weeks to capture some new star players. If he fails, the coaching job will go to Mark Collins. Watching a film of Father O'Hara's missionary work with the Winabi tribe in

◀ is an action which acknowledges the cultural consequences that greed – be it his own player-harvesting or Nyaga's expanding commercial operation – can have. The game's prize becomes the survival of Dolan's adopted tribe.

The relationship between sports and race was recently studied in *White Men Can't Jump*, which explored racial stereotypes surrounding basketball. In *The Air Up There*, Western commerce is portrayed as a corrupting influence: Glaser's film does not shirk the disturbing similarity between the way sportsmen and cattle are bought and sold. In his pursuit of profit and worldly success, Nyaga shares characteristics with the unreconstructed Dolan, and it is only the peaceful Winabi who remain untainted. The main thrust of the film lies in its equation between individual and collective duty where team and tribe share the same positions. This is something pertinent to several of the key actors – Zairean Ilo Mutombo and US-born Nigel Miguel (Halawi) were basketball stars at US colleges, while Charles Gitonga Maina holds the Nairobi slam-dunk title, and hopes to follow hundreds of other Africans to the US on a sports scholarship.

In keeping with the knowledge that western commerce can be seriously disruptive to tribal life, Glaser's film is sensitively made. It was filmed on location primarily in Kenya and South Africa, the semi-nomadic Samburu tribe providing both model and actors for the story's Winabi. Two Samburus (Douglas Leboyare and Jomo Lewarani) gained key roles as Saleh's warrior companions, while elsewhere Glaser utilised Samburu craftsmen and shepherds to complete his portrayal of Winabi culture. The results are arresting, some of the best scenes being those where tribal chanting is intercut with the action of the final basketball game. Added to a first-class soundtrack which includes a healthy dose of African jive and high-life music, *The Air Up There* is a fast and exciting film.

Kevin Bacon fills out Dolan's role well; his transition from the fast-talking hustle of assistant coach is believably managed and his entrance into Winabi society achieved without sentimentality. Well-established actors Winston Ntshona and Mabutho 'Kid' Sithole lend their characters gravity and menace respectively; Maina handles his first acting role with elegance and poise; and Yolanda Vazquez has a strong presence as Sister Susan, the nun who functions as Dolan's challenger.

The Air Up There deserves a wider success than it has so far received at the US box office. Whether or not its secondary effect will be a tribe of star-struck Samburu is an imponderable issue. However, Glaser's handling seems co-operative rather than exploitative, and, if Apple's script produces a greater awareness of the cultural economy of sporting competition, then a process will begin that only starts with this film.

Louise Gray

Angie

USA 1994

Director: Martha Coolidge

Certificate

15

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Hollywood Pictures

Scapa Via Productions

In association with

Caravan Pictures

A Morra-Brezner

Steinberg-Tenenbaum

production

Executive Producers

Joe Roth

Roger Birnbaum

Producers

Larry Brezner

Patrick McCormick

Co-producer

Todd Graff

Production Co-ordinator

Monica Melvin-Fratkin

Unit Production Managers

Patrick McCormick

Lenny Vullo

Location Manager

Richard Davis Jnr

Assistant Directors

Randall Badger

Michele Panelli-Venetis

Julie A. Bloom

James Greenhut

New York:

Catherine M.

McDonald

Casting

Juliet Taylor

Associate:

Laura Rosenthal

Screenplay

Todd Graff

Based on the novel

Angie, I Says by

Avra Wing

Script Supervisor

Lynn Lewis Lovett

Director of Photography

Johnny E. Jensen

Camera/Steadicam Operators

P. Scott Sakamoto

New York:

Anastas Michos

Editor

Steven Cohen

Production Designer

Mel Bourne

Art Director

Gae S. Buckley

Set Decorators

Etta Leff

New York:

Leslie Bloom

Production Illustrator

Maurice Zuberano

Special Effects

Al DiSarro

Damon Allison

Costume Design

Jane Robinson

Costume Supervisor

Nancy Stone Renard

Wardrobe Supervisors

Lisa Frucht

Timothy J. Alberts

Make-up Design

Richard Dean

Hair Design

Lyndell Quiyou

Title Design

Deborah Ross Film

Design

Titles/Opticals

VCE Inc.

Music/Conductor

Jerry Goldsmith

Ballet Sequence

Conductor/Music

Arrangements

Paul Connelly

Orchestrations

Arthur Morton

Music Editors

Ken Hall

Darrell Hall

Songs/Music Extracts

"I'll Take You There"

by Advertis Isbell,

performed by The

Staple Singers;

"Pressure" by Lucia

Holm, Paul Carnell,

performed by

Sunscream; "Santa

Claus Is Coming to

Town" by J. Fred Coots,

Haven Gillespie,

performed by Louie

Louie; "One," "What

I Did for Love" by

Marvin Hamlisch,

Edward Kleban;

"Circle" by Todd Park

Mohr, performed by

Big Head Todd and The

Monsters; "Devil Wind"

by Paul Kirby, Danny

Tate, performed by

The Cactus Bros; "Band

of Gold" by Ronald

Dunbar, Edythe Wayne,

performed by Freda

Payne; "Rubberband

Girl" by and performed

by Kate Bush; "Joy" by

Simon Philip Thorne,

Thomas Edet Jones,

performed by Staxx;

"The Wheel" by and

performed by

Roseanne Cash;

"Meditation" (from

Thais) by Jules Massen

et

Choreography

Michael Smuin

Sound Design

Leslie Shatz

Dialogue Editors

Theresa Eckton

Mark Levinson

Bob Shoup

ADR Editors

Joan E. Chapman

John Nutt

Foley Editor

Malcolm Fife

Production Sound

Ed Novick

ADR Mixers

Bob Baron

Paul Zydel

Bob Deschaine

Foley Mixers

Michael Semanic

Eric Thompson

Music Mixer

Bruce Botnick

Re-recording Mixers

Leslie Shatz

David Parker

Sound Effects Editor

Kim B. Christensen

Foley Artists

Jennifer Myers

Margie O'Malley

Medical Technical Advisers

Jo Friedman

Tina Moore-Yamron

Prenatal Consultant

Eileen Davis

Stunt Co-ordinator

Michael G. Russo

Cast

Geena Davis

Angie

Stephen Rea

Noel

James Gandolfini

Vinnie

Aida Turturro

Tina

Philip Bosco

Frank

Jenny O'Hara

Kathy

Michael Rispoli

Jerry

Betty Miller

Joanne

Susan Jaffe

Ballerina

Jeremy Collins

Lover

Robert Conn

Death

Ray Xifo
Dr Gould
Rosemary De Angelis
Aunt Vicky
Rae Allen
Aunt Violetta
Ida Bernardini
Aunt Louisa
Frank Pellegrino
Uncle Marty
Michael Laskin
Surgeon
Jean Marie Barnwell
Young Angie
Elaine Kagan
Aunt Jean
Olga Meredith
Roz
Marylouise Burke
Fern
Mike Jefferson
Tony
Marin Hinkle
Young Joanne
Nancy Giles
Bedside Nurse
Antoinette Peragine
Circulating Nurse
Charlayne Woodard
Floor Nurse
Adam LeFevre
Museum Guard
Michael Goldfinger
Director
Joanne Baron
April Grace
ICU Nurses
Vernee Watson-Johnson
ICU Desk Nurse
Bibi Osterwald
Dr Gould's Nurse
Robbie Wenger
Boy in Park
Matt Hoffner
Coffee Shop Waiter

Louis Gigante
Priest
Joanna Sanchez
Margaret Cho
Admissions Nurses
Anthony Baracco
Leonard Spinelli
Tina's Sons
John Toles-Bey
Hospital Guard
Eileen Davis
Cranky Labour Nurse
Roseanne Tucci
Bernadette
Maria Venusio
Denise
Marie Coluccio
Nicole
Lauren Cona
Donna
Marya Delia Javier
Alba
Diane DiLascio
Lori
Nancy Lewis
Man in Wheelchair
Dawn Hudson
Woman on Bus
James Plair
Bus Driver
Simone Study
Woman at Bar
Ron Michaels
Tony Ray Rossi
Mechanics
Sharon Claveau
Woman in Window

9,689 feet
108 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor
Anamorphic

Angie has lived in Brooklyn all her life. She and her childhood friend Tina both work on a computer magazine in Manhattan. Angie's biggest regret is that she has lost contact with her natural mother, who walked out when she was a kid. When Angie discovers that she is pregnant, her longtime boyfriend Vinnie, father Frank and step-mother Kathy are overjoyed and plans are made for the wedding. Angie, however, has reservations. One day she visits the Metropolitan Museum, where she is chatted up by a stranger who introduces himself as



Push comes to shove: Geena Davis

Adapted from Avra Wing's novel, *Angie, I Says*, Martha Coolidge's film begins with an engagingly droll monologue from its eponymous heroine, who is played with great gusto by Geena Davis. Apparently following in the footsteps of *Thelma & Louise*, this is a woman's film about two working-class, Italian-American friends, Angie and Tina (Aida Turturro swelling the ranks of brilliant and under-used American actresses). Angie herself is just another girl on the IRT. She has big hair, loud earrings, Brooklyn twang ("very De Niro" as the Irish Noel says) and a boyfriend in a shiny suit called Vinnie. The opening credit sequence of a busy station at night with New York City glittering alluringly in the distance suggests that there are journeys Angie must make. But she does not take recklessly to the road. Nor is this the story of a working girl's passage from typing pool to executive suite. It is about the everyday excursions that seem to get you nowhere.

The movie opens with the 11-year-old Angie playing with other girls in the street and asking the perennial question: "What will it be like when we grow up?" Just then, the adult Angie and Tina pass by, and Angie, her face smudged with eye make-up in a desperate bid to leave girlhood behind, looks longingly at her younger self. This fragment is shot in slow motion, an evocative moment announcing Angie's intention of dealing with what growing up might mean for its female protagonist.

The film's strength is that it recognises the messiness of life, whether in relationships with family, friends and men, or in aspirations that are never quite fulfilled. Unusually for a Hollywood studio film, *Angie* is also matter-of-fact about the other kinds of mess women have to deal with, such as the blood, sweat and milk of pregnancy and mothering. Angie's girl friends graphically describe their labour-day experiences, while Angie's own session in the delivery room is a comic *tour de force*. She grimaces, groans and shouts expletives while holding Tina's hand in a vice-like grip.

Coolidge gives the physical agony a hysterical twist: Angie's gynaecologist recommends singing a Marvin Hamlisch show-stopper while following Lamaze breathing techniques. Cue an outburst of "One Singular Sensation", with Angie forced to join in through gritted teeth.

One wishes that Coolidge and screenwriter Todd Graff had adopted this irreverent approach at other moments too. The film falters towards the end as Angie tries to come to terms with the fact that not only has she just become a mother, but that her son has a deformed arm. She takes flight, and there is a melancholy about her search for her mother and the discovery of her schizophrenia. But this chaos of emotions is dealt with too tidily in a neatly sewn-up finale, in which Angie is reconciled with everyone around her and happy in her grown-up role.

Lizzie Francke

Bad Girls

USA 1994

Director: Jonathan Kaplan

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

20th Century Fox

Production Company

20th Century Fox

A Ruddy Morgan production

Executive Producer

Lynda Obst

Producers

Albert S. Ruddy

Andre E. Morgan

Charles Finch

2nd Unit:

Bruce Meade

Co-producer

William Fay

Production Supervisor

Laura Greenlee

Production Co-ordinator

Elizabeth Ervin

Unit Production Manager

William Fay

Location Managers

Patricia Fay

2nd Unit:

Jim Selzer

Post-production Supervisor

Paul Biddle

Production Consultant

Rodney Liber

2nd Unit Director

Walter Scott

Assistant Directors

Jules Lichtman

Nunzio Fazio

Evan Gilner

Sonora:

Jordan Stone

Rick Feder

Suzanne Geiger

2nd Unit:

Alexandra Perce

Casting

Mike Fenton

Julie Ashton

Julie Selzer

Texas:

Liz Keigly

Screenplay

Ken Friedman

Yolande Finch

Story

Albert S. Ruddy

Charles Finch

Gray Frederickson

Script Supervisors

Faith Conroy

2nd Unit:

Dee Chappell

Director of Photography

Ralf Bode

2nd Unit Directors of Photography

Phillip Pfeiffer

Dan Turrett

Jaime Anderson

Camera Operators

C. Mitchell Amundsen

B:

Edward Gold

Editor

Jane Kurson

Production Designer

Guy Barnes

Art Director

M. Nord Haggerty

Set Decorators

Michael Taylor

Sonora:

Brian Kasch

Set Dressers

Loren Patrick Lyons

Sonora:

Michelle Baron

Storyboard Artist

Alan Hoffman

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

John C. Hartigan

Special Effects

Ultimate Effects

Paul Hickerson

Geoff Brewis

Costume Design

Susie DeSanto

Costume Supervisors

Melissa Merwin

Eileen Mae Sieff

Make-up Artists

Patty York

Lucienne Zammit

Monika Blunder

Make-up Effects

Tony Gardner

Hairstylists

Barbara Olvera

Edward St. George

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music/Music Conductor

Jerry Goldsmith

Songs

"Shall We Gather at the River", "Onward Christian Soldiers" performed by The Great Mother Lode Brass and Reed Band; "Streets of Laredo", solo guitar performed by James LeGros; "Lorena" performed by Robert Loggia

Sound Design/Supervision

Sandy Berman

Sound Editors

Marvin Walowitz

Susan Dudeck

Scott Hecker

Elliott Koretz

Bruce Lacey

Larry Mann

ADR Supervisor

Jerelyn Harding

ADR Editors

Lauren Palmer

Beth Bergeron

ADR Group Co-ordinator

Leigh French

Foley Supervisor

Mark Pappas

Foley Editors

Nash Michael

Chris Flick

Sound Mixers

Jose Antonio Garcia

2nd Unit:

Wayne Bell

ADR Mixers

Bob Deschaine

Thomas J. O'Connell

Foley Mixers

David Jobe

Jim Ashwill

Re-recording Mixers

Gregg Landaker

Steve Maslow

Recordists

Brian Paccassi

Nerses Gezalayan

Foley Artists

Zane Bruce

Alicia Stevenson

Gary Hecker

Dan O'Connell

Stunt Co-ordinator

Walter Scott

Animal Wranglers

Movin' On Livestock

Clay Lilley

Jack Lilley

Davey Rodgers

Cast

Madeleine Stowe

Cody Zamora

Mary Stuart Masterson

Anita Crown

Andie MacDowell

Eileen Spenser

Drew Barrymore

Lilly Larronette

James Russo

Kid Jarrett

James LeGros

William Tucker

Robert Loggia

Frank Jarrett

Dermot Mulroney

Josh McCoy

Jim Beaver

Detective Graves

Nick Chinlund

Detective O'Brady

Neil Summers

Ned

Daniel O'Haco

Roberto

Richard E. Reyes

Rico

Alex Kubik

Yuma

Will MacMillan

Colonel Clayborne

Harry Northup

Preacher

Don Hood

Echo City Sheriff

Donald L. Montoya

Station Master

Zoanne LeRoy

Widow Clayborne

Jimmy Lewis Jr

Surrey Driver

Millie Waddles

Widow's Maid

Vince Davis

Apparel Clerk

Blue Deckert

Rich Citizen

Rodger Boyce

Bank Manager

Nik Hagler

Aqua Dulce Marshal

Mark Felch

Teller

Max Bode

Boy in Bank

Cooper Huckabee

Deputy Earl

Richard Robbins

Posse Member

Beulah Quo

Chinese Herbalist

Rick Lundin

Wagon Driver Jack

Mark Carlton

Lawyer Lurie

Amber Leigh

Laughing Woman

Chuck Bennett

Covered Wagon Driver

R. C. Bates

Tector

8,370 feet

93 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

DeLuxe

get away, but Eileen is captured by the sheriff. William, a local farmer, is deputised to guard her and is soon seduced by her charms.

Cody rides to Kid's hideout, where plans are being laid to hijack an army train for gold and a Gatling gun. Cody tries to get her money back but is whipped and possibly raped by Kid. Josh, who has been tracking the Jarrett Gang, finds her and takes her to a Chinese woman for treatment. Anita and Lilly get Eileen out of jail and join up with Cody and Josh. Josh joins forces with the women, explaining that he wants revenge on Frank Jarrett, Kid's father, for killing his own father and raping his mother.

The four women and Josh go to hide out at William's ranch. Romance blossoms between Cody and Josh, and Eileen and William. All six ambush Kid's gang and hijack the booty from the train. Kid's gang catches Lilly, but the women capture Kid's father, Frank, and hope to do a prisoner swap with the guns. Lilly is raped by Kid. Meanwhile, Anita learns that her land claim is useless without her husband. Frank taunts Josh about his mother, so Josh kills him. To make up for scotching their chances of a prisoner swap, Josh springs Lilly from the hideout but is caught in the process. The women ride to Kid's with the Gatling gun to trade for Josh; but once the swap is made, Kid shoots Josh anyway, and he dies in Cody's arms. After a huge firefight, the women emerge victorious, having wiped out the whole gang. Eileen decides to stay on at the ranch with William, while Cody, Anita, and Lilly ride off for the Klondike, with the Pinkertons still on their trail.

Classical Hollywood Westerns tended to be the most reactionary of the major genres, depicting a West where men were men and women were at home and made the



Girls and their chaps: Andie MacDowell, Mary Stuart Masterson, Madeleine Stowe

◀ corn fritters. Moreover, the men were generally white men unless they were evil Indians or shifty Mexicans. The liberationist politics of the 60s undermined the values of the Western, and the genre fell into neglect. Now, for whatever strange matrix of reasons, the Western is back on the horse again, but this time round star-billing in the saddle are all those oppressed minorities who never got a chance to hold the reins when the old guard was in power. Thus we've had Afro-American Westerns (*Posse*), faintly feminist Westerns (*The Ballad of Little Jo*), Native American Westerns (*Dances With Wolves*) and even Senior Citizen Westerns (*Unforgiven*).

Bad Girls is more or less in this revisionist strain, featuring as it does four wronged women fighting against a patriarchal society which does not recognise a woman's right to own land or shoot a man in self-defence. Or so it seems on the surface. In actual fact, *Bad Girls* is about as politically correct as a L'Oreal hair mousse commercial, which it resembles far more than *The Searchers* or even *Johnny Guitar*.

By all accounts, *Bad Girls* had a rough ride to the screen. Originally to be directed by Tamra Davis, with Cynda Williams co-starring, its street cred halved when its budget doubled. The woman director and black actress were dropped in favour of Jonathan Kaplan and an all white-bread-fed cast. One wonders what remnants of the original script remain. Possibly, bonding above and beyond the ordinary realms of female friendship and starting a small logging business might have been on the agenda. That would explain the strangely foregrounded kiss Eileen plants on the lips of Lilly early on, and the latter's testy jealousy when Eileen stays behind with a man. Sadly, these are only the faintest tinges of anything remotely sapphic in this resolutely straight-acting, straight-shooting, drearily straight-faced farce. The Western's substantial following of gays and lesbians will have to wait for Gus Van Sant's *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, if it ever gets released in Britain, to satisfy their appetite for cowpoke camp. In the meantime, *Bad Girls* will hardly satisfy them or anyone else, though it has to be said that Madeleine Stowe looks fetchingly butch for most of the film, despite her excessive quantities of hair.

By far the most unsatisfying thing about *Bad Girls* is that they aren't nearly bad enough. At regularly timed points throughout, each one is allowed a little monologue to explain how she was forced into prostitution by circumstances. Two of them have to be raped before they seriously think about getting some revenge (Kaplan also directed *The Accused*). Cody has such a ridiculously developed sense of fairness that she even tosses Kid Jarrett a bullet so that he has an even chance in a draw to the death; "Pick it up, put it in and die like a man," she snarls. The Office of Fair Trading should be notified about the title, which ought to be *Victimised Girls Who Are Quite Nice Really*.

Leslie Felperin Sharman

Beverly Hills Cop III

USA 1994

Director: John Landis

Certificate

15

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Paramount

Executive Producer

Mark Lipsey

Producer

Mace Neufeld

Robert Rehme

Co-producer

Leslie Belzberg

Associate Producer

Ray Murphy Jnr

Production Office

Co-ordinator

Paula Benson Himes

Unit Production Manager

Martin Hornstein

Location Manager

Ron Windred

2nd Unit Director

Steve Boyum

Assistant Directors

Arthur Anderson

Albert Cho

William Jennings

Casting

Jackie Burch

Screenplay

Steven E. de Souza

Based on characters

created by Danilo Bach,

Daniel Petrie Jnr

Script Supervisor

Thomas Johnston

Director of Photography

Mac Ahlberg

Camera Operators

Cary Fisher

David Boyd

Steadicam Operator

Greg Lundsgaard

Special Visual Effects

Illusion Arts Inc:

Syd Dutton

Bill Taylor

Graphic Designer

Christine McKenzie

Editor

Dale Beldin

Production Designer

Michael Seymour

Art Director

Thomas P. Wilkins

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Ann-Giselle Spiegler

Set Decorator

Marvin March

On-Set Dresser

Tamara Clinard

Illustrator

Ricardo Delgado

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Jon G. Belyeu

Special Effects

William Aldridge

Chris Burton

Manny Epstein

Chuck Hessey

Hal Selig

Foreman:

Larry Fuentes

Costume Design

Catherine Adair

Park Characters:

Kelly Kimball

Wardrobe Supervisor

Sue Moore

Make-up

Supervisor:

Marietta Carter

Narcisse

Key Artists:

Geri Oppenheim

Toy Russell-Van Lierop

Coree Lear

Dean Sadler

Hairstylists

D. J. Plumb

Ora Tillman Green

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music

Nile Rodgers

Music Conductor

Nick Perito

Orchestrations

Mark McKenzie

Music Supervisor

Kathy Nelson

Supervising Music Editor

Jeff Carson

Music Editor

Tom Villano

Music Consultants

Ken Kushnick

David Passick

Music Production Set

Supervisor

John E. Oliver

Songs/Music Extracts

"The Wonderworld

Song" by Richard M.

Sherman, Robert B.

Sherman; "Axel F"

by Harold Faltermeyer,

performed by Nile

Rodgers, featuring

Richard Hilton; "Come

See About Me" by Brian

Holland, Edward

Holland, Lamont

Dozier, performed by

The Supremes; "Isn't It

Romantic" by Lorenz

Hart, Richard Rodgers;

"Keep the Peace" by

Keith Forsey, Mark

Younger-Smith,

Andrew Farriss,

Michael Hutchence,

performed by INXS;

"Leavin'" by Raphael

Wiggins, John Smith, J.

Davis, A. Muhammed,

performed by Tony

Toni Toné; contains

samples from "If the

Papes Come"

performed by A Tribe

Called Quest; "Luv 4

Dem Gangsta'z" by

Keven "Shaki" Carter,

Doctor Jam, performed

by Eazy-E; "Mood" by

James Harris III, Terry

Lewis, Chanté Moore,

performed by Chanté

Moore; "North Dakota,

South Dakota" by Dan

Shapiro, Tony Martin,

Harold Borne,

performed by Jerry

Lewis; "The Place

Where You Belong"

by Carl Martin, Trey

Lorenz, Darnell Van

Rensalier, Marc Gay,

Garfield Bright,

performed by Shai;

"The Right Kinda

Lover" by James Harris

III, Terry Lewis, Ann

Bennett-Nesby, Jimmy

Wright, performed by

Patti LaBelle; "Right

Thing, Wrong Way"

by James Harris III,

Terry Lewis, Terence

Trent D'Arby,

performed by Terence

Trent D'Arby; "Stella

by Starlight" by Ned

Washington, Victor

Young; "Summer

Jamming" by Ian Lewis,

performed by Inner

Circle

Choreography

Smith Wordes

Supervising Sound Editors

Rick Franklin

Doug Jackson

Supervising Dialogue

Editor

Joseph A. Ippolito

Dialogue Editors

Kevin Hearst

Gloria D'Alessandro

ADR Supervisor

James Beshears

ADR Editor

Stephen Janisz

ADR Group Co-ordinator

Leigh French

Foley Editors

Jeff Bushelman

Stephen F. Mann

Sound Mixer

Joseph Geisinger

ADR Mixer

Robert Baron

Foley Mixer

Eric Gotthelf

Re-recording Mixers

Paul Massey

Scott Millan

Steve Pederson

Sound Effects Editors

Kerry Dean Williams

William Jacobs

Foley Artists

Ken Dufva

David Lee Fein

Stunt Co-ordinator

Rick Avery

Cast

Eddie Murphy

Axel Foley

Judge Reinhold

Billy Rosewood

Hector Elizondo

Jon Flint

Theresa Randle

Janice

Jon Tenney

Levine

Joey Travolta

Giolito

Eugene Collier

Leppert

Jimmy Ortega

Rondell

Ousaun Elam

Pederson

Ray Lykins

Nixon

Tim Gilbert

McKee

Rick Avery

Cline

Gil Hill

Todd

Dick Purtan

Detroit Disc Jockey

Fred Asparagus

Bobby

Louis Lombardi

Snake

Lindsey Ginter

Holloway

Timothy Carhart

Ellis DeWald

Michael Bowen

Fletch

David Parry

Taddeo

Stephen McHattie

Steve Fulbright

Al Green

Minister

Hattie Winston

Mrs Todd

Tracy Lindsey

Ticket Booth Girl

Gregory McKinney

Kimbrough

Forry Smith

Rondy

Dan Martin

Cooper

escapes and drives the ailing Dave to hospital, but he is suspected of doing the shooting. Dewald holds Janice hostage to force Foley to return to Wonder World. With the help of Rosewood, Flint and the Annihilator 2000 – an extraordinary weapon picked up from his old friend Serge, who has forsaken the art world for personal survival consultancy – Foley saves Janice and foils the counterfeiters' plot. In a final shoot-out, Foley kills both DeWald and Fulbright, who, it transpires, was part of the conspiracy. Rosewood, Flint and Foley all sustain serious gunshot wounds, but recover enough to watch the revived Uncle Dave open a new ride – the Axel Fox.

● If the drop in quality between *Beverly Hills Cop* and its sequel had been repeated in this third episode of the Axel Foley saga, we would have had a real stinker on our hands. As it is, director John Landis and star Eddie Murphy have succeeded in making a rousing old-fashioned swashbuckler which almost achieves classic action movie status. In the intervening years between episodes two and three, Eddie Murphy has all but lost and – thanks mainly to *Boomerang* – partially regained his star lustre. The early signs in this movie are not promising. There is a depressingly formulaic quality to the extreme violence of the opening sequence, and it is not until our hero is back in Beverly Hills, on fish-out-of-water territory, that matters pick up.

The theme park setting is not exactly an original idea, but Wonder World itself is imaginatively used. It provides the backdrop to some highly effective action sequences – Foley's mid-air rescue of two children on a disintegrating hi-tech ferris wheel, for example – while also serving to highlight the ambivalent nature of Foley himself, as he flits in and out of sight in an environment of blatant but strangely innocent commercial exploitation. The movie's gung-ho celebration of excess firepower and law enforcement is mediated by a healthy measure of satire – as with the character of Serge, the art world stooge from *Beverly Hills Cop*, who now deals in outlandish designer weapons for "urban survivalists who want to survive with style". No longer simply the butt of Foley's homophobia, his exotic cadences mock the latter's vocal acrobatics, and the absurd weapons he supplies – with microwave and fax attached – parody the consumer sadism that plays such a large part in the series' success.

If the movie does not exactly break genre conventions, it certainly has fun with them. Detective Flint's revelation that he is just a few weeks away from retirement should mark him out for certain death, yet he survives. And Landis has been relatively restrained with cameo appearances – with the exception of Al Green as a singing vicar, they are all directors (Joe Dante, Barbet Schroeder, John Singleton) whom even the most eagle-eyed buff would be hard put to recognise.

Ben Thompson

The Chase

USA 1994

Director: Adam Rifkin

Certificate

15

Distributor

20th Century Fox

Production Companies

20th Century Fox/
Hercules Films

Executive Producers

Eduard Sarlui

Charlie Sheen

Producers

Brad Wyman

Cassian Elwes

Co-producer

Elliot Lewis Rosenblatt

Associate Producers

Hannah Leader

Romi Stepovich

Supervising Producer

Brian Cook

Production Co-ordinators

Tom Vranesich

2nd Unit:

Brooke Rand McDonald

Unit Production Manager

Debra Marie Simon

Location Manager

Martha C. Pilcher

Post-production Supervisor

Linda Shames Rosman

Assistant Directors

Laura Groppe

Donald Sparks

Athena Alexander

2nd Unit:

Mike Smith

Paul Bernard

Casting

Jakki Fink

Voice:

SuperLoopers

Screenplay

Adam Rifkin

Script Supervisors

Harri James

2nd Unit:

Patti Fullerton

Director of Photography

Alan Jones

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Jimmy Davis

Camera Operators

Wayne Forster

2nd Unit:

Malcolm MacIntosh

Video

Co-ordinator:

Chris Clifton

Inserts:

Steve Irwin

Director/Channel 20:

Walter Naar

Camera/Channel 20:

Tim Sinclair

Scott Schrock

Tape/Channel 20:

Mark Braverman

Audio/Channel 20:

Leslie Skolnick

Graphics/Channel 20:

Robyn Hughes

Graphics

Oscar Villareal

Editor

Peter Schink

Production Designer

Sherman Williams

Art Director

Jack Cloud

Set Decorator

Craig Loper

Scenic Artist

Nancy Nigh

Storyboard Artist

John Coven

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Bill Purcell

Special Effects

Scott Rushton

Costume Design

Yvette Correa

Costume Supervisor

Laura Swingler

Wardrobe

Jeff Allen

Make-up/Hairstylists

Vivian Baker

David Anderson

Tyger Tate

Hairstylist:

Patricia Gundlach

2nd Unit:

Abiba Howell

Title Design

Wenden K. Baldwin

Mitchell S. Drain

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

Richard Gibbs

Music Performed by

Six Point Six:

Michael Jochum

Jaime Glaser

Kevin McCormick

Michael Thompson

Casey Fleming

Dave McKelvy

Music Supervisor

Tarquin Gotch

Music Editor

Will Kaplan

Music Co-ordinators

Rick Devoe

Doug Mark

Songs

"Breakdown" by

D. J. McKiven,

T. Carmichael, D. E.

Allison, performed

by One Dove; "Shine"

by and performed by

The Rollins Band; "The

Next Life" by Brett

Anderson, Bernard

Butler, performed by

Suede; "Adina", "The

Bottle" by Tim

Armstrong, Matt

Freeman, performed

by Rancid; "Two Babies

in the Dark" by Brett

Gurewitz, performed

by Bad Religion; "Take

it Like a Man", "Forever

and a Day" by and

performed by

Offspring; "Warm",

"Please Play This Song

on the Radio" by Fat

Mike, performed

by NOFX; "Our Own

Way" by Chris

Bagarozzi, Dave

Smalley, performed

by Down By Law;

"Macho Man" by

Jacques Morali, Henri

Belolo, Victor Willis,

Peter Whitehead,

performed by Stephen

Stuart Short; "House"

by and performed

by Dan Carlson

Supervising Sound Editors

Hari Ryatt

Gregory King

Dialogue Editors

Craig Clark

Willy Allen

Alan Schultz

Supervising ADR Editor

Bruce Stubblefield

ADR Editors

Ed Callahan

Noah Blough

Production Sound Mixer

Tim Himes

2nd Unit Sound Mixer

Robert W. Waller

ADR Mixer

Chris Tucker

Foley Mixer

Dino Pigat

Music Recordists

Gabriel Veltri

Daniel Buchanan

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Don White

David Appleby

Scott Purdy

Sound Effects Editor

Greg King

Yann Delpuech

Nelson Ferreira

Joel Valentine

Foley Artist

Andy Malcolm

Stunt Co-ordinator

Buddy Joe Hooker

Film Extract

Planet of the Apes (1968)

Cast

Charlie Sheen

Jack Hammond

Kristy Swanson

Natalie Voss

Henry Rollins

Officer Dobbs

Josh Mostel

Officer Figus

Wayne Grace

Chief Boyle

Rocky Carroll

Byron Wilder

Miles Dougal

Liam Segal

Ray Wise

Dalton Voss

Marshall Bell

Ari Josephson

Joe Segal

Sergeant Hodges

Claudia Christian

Yvonne Voss

Alex Allen Morris

Marco Perella

Cops

Wirt Cain

Bill Cromwell

Bree Walker

Wendy Sorenson

Brian Chessney

Officer Robinson

Joe Berryman

Officer Kraus

Natalija Nogulich

Frances Voss

David Harrod

Troy

John S. Davies

Corey Steinhoff

Chamblée Ferguson

Convenience Store

Clerk

Larry Clifton

Ned Rice

Paul Dandridge

Himself

Hibbs

Windshield Corpse

Flea

Dale

Anthony Kiedis

Will

Sean McGraw

Tom Capone

Melissa Zoelle

Paige Grunion

Ron Hyatt

Channel 3 Cameraman

R. Bruce Elliot

Frank Smuntz

Cary Elwes

Steve Horsegroovy

Gabriella Lamiel

Lolly Juniper

Deborah Oliver Artis

Police Dispatcher

Windlind Smith

News Director

Steve Smith

James Black

Eric Glenn

Werner Richmond

Final Cops

Cassian Elwes

Como ser mujer y no morir en el intento (How To Be A Woman And Not Die In The Attempt)

Spain 1991

Director: Ana Belén

Certificate
15
Distributor
Mayfair Entertainment
Production Company
Ibero-Americana Films
España
Executive Producer
Andrés Vicente Gómez
Head of Production
Rafael Fernández
Production Supervisor
José G. Jacoste
Production Co-ordinator
Begoña Pedrazas
Assistant Director
Manolo Gómez
Screenplay
Carmen Rico-Godoy
Based on her novel
Continuity
Eugenia Cuesta
Director of Photography
Juan Amoros
Steadicam Operator
Carlos Cabeceran
Editor
Carmen Frías
Art Director
Gerardo Vera
Set Dressers
Lalo Obrero
Javier Zulueta
Special Effects
Theatre Effects:
Luis Castro
Make-up
Juan Pedro Hernández
Music
Antonio García De
Diego
Pancho Varona
Mariano Díaz
Sound
Gilles Ortion
Mixing
Eduardo Fernández

Cast
Carmen Maura
Carmen
Antonio Resines
Antonio
Juanjo Puigcorvé
Mariano
Carmen Conesa
Chelo
Tina Sainz
Emilia
Paca Casares
Editor/Director
Victor García
Diego
Olalla Aguirre
Marta
Juan Diego Botto
Sergio
Luis Pérez Agua
Manolo
Asunción Balaguer
Antonio's Mother
Enriqueta Carballeira
Pepita
Miguel Rellan
Alfredo
Mercedes Lezcano
Pilar
Miguel Arribas
Carlos
Begoña Valle
Margarita
Jua Gea
Gynaecologist
Flora Ma. Alvaro
Tere
Paco Aguilar
Federico
José Carlos Plaza
Pepe
Gabriel Jimenez
Olaizola
Jose Ma. Canete
Maitre at Beach
Restaurant
Angelica Revert
Topless Girl
Pablo Carrion
Pepe

7,984 feet
89 minutes

In colour
Eastman
Anamorphic

Subtitles

Carmen, a middle-class journalist in her 40s, lives with her third husband Antonio, a record producer. Absorbed by his work, he is dependent on – but generally unappreciative of – her organisation of their domestic affairs, insensitive to her emotional needs and dismissive of her professional worries.

In the male-dominated environment of a Madrid daily, Carmen's energy and reliability are exploited by her colleagues and the thinly-disguised manipulations of her editor. Her hectic life is a balancing act between career, marriage and family, which she tackles

with energy and humour, offering emotional support to three growing children (two from her own previous marriages and one from Antonio's), friends and colleagues alike, while also coming to terms with the ageing process. The demands of these often conflicting roles, further complicated by Antonio's self-absorption and other aggravations – such as the impounding of her illegally-parked car and an untimely gumboil – inevitably take their toll.

Starting with an argumentative summer holiday marred by sunburn and a disastrous dinner with friends, the autumn brings tight deadlines for articles and interviews, and jealousy and insecurity in Carmen's marriage. Matters come to a head in the winter, fraught with Christmas celebrations with her in-laws, contingency plans to recover forgotten gifts, explosive family rows, a dubiously-motivated promotion at work, and a severe communication breakdown with Antonio. Carmen's growing resentment prompts her to consider seriously the advantages of living alone.

The arrival of spring and a chance meeting with Antonio in the street at lunchtime brings a momentary return of romance to their relationship, but it is followed by separation. After Antonio attempts a reconciliation, the two meet for lunch on neutral ground.

Nearly 30 years after her early teens acting debut at the tail-end of a glut of sentimental Spanish child-star movies in the 60s, Ana Belén's directorial first adds another dimension to her multi-faceted career. A chart-topping singer, Belén has a variable string of stage and screen appearances to her name – ranging from light Spanish sex comedies of the 70s to literary adaptations such as Mario Camus's *The House of Bernarda Alba* (1987) – and, since 1980, she has jointly managed her own production company, Ion Films, with singer husband Victor Manuel. *How To Be A Woman And Not Die In The Attempt* establishes Belén as a competent, if as yet unremarkable, member of that rare breed, Spanish women film-makers.

Produced by Iberoamericana's prolific Andrés Vicente Gómez, but less strikingly exportable than his projects with Saura, Bigas Luna and Almodóvar, the film has perhaps surprisingly found a British release after sitting on the shelf for nearly three years. Its respectable box-office performance in Spain was largely due to the popularity of its well-established leads, Carmen Maura and Antonio Resines, and the record-breaking success of the novel by Carmen Rico Godoy (long-standing columnist with the popular Spanish news magazine *Cambio 16*) on which it is based. The book, which had 16 editions in its first year of publication, is one of a light-hearted series of 'Themes of Today' which whimsically broach such contemporary phenomena as *Yuppies*, the jet set, the 'movida' and other species and *How to Escape '92*. Resines (the unrecognisably masked gang-leader

from Alex de la Iglesia's *Acción Mutante*) is probably Spain's best-known contemporary comic actor, though less familiar to British audiences than erstwhile Almodóvar star Maura, whose proven comic skills provide the narrative anchor and complicitly indulgent female perspective of the film.

Carmen is torn between professional commitment and ambition, her sense of entitlement to her independence and an increasingly resentful fulfilment of the traditional, self-sacrificial roles of wife and mother. Within a narrow world of high-profile middle-class media professionals, the film focuses on the difficult and painful adjustment of gender relations to the rapid and uneven changes in the role of women in Spain over the last two decades. It is not so long since Spanish women needed their husband's permission to obtain a passport and, despite massive changes in legislation for equality, the vestiges of an anachronistic *machismo* still pervade both the private and the public sphere. A recent report by the socialist trade union, UGT, claimed that some 40 per cent of women experience sexual harassment in the workplace.

Carmen encounters other such discriminatory attitudes at work, where she is offered promotion to the dubious position of scapegoat to an incompetent male editor, with the patronising suggestion that she should go home and discuss it with her husband before making a decision. At home, Antonio's stereotypically egocentric behaviour is clearly flagged as unreasonable. However, the absurdity of his lack of reconstruction – the banality of his puerile interest in topless sunbathers, his total disengagement with domestic concerns and paranoiac claims that Carmen's dietary advice is castrating – sometimes risks being read as an apologetic dismissal of his chauvinism as innocuous distraction and boyish petulance.

It is the empathic identification with Carmen's sharp-witted and increasingly bitter point of view which maintains the film's critical edge, translating the first-person address of the novel into frequent thought-voice-overs and dialogues with herself, and powerfully juxtaposing Carmen's cynical predictions with the frustrating fulfilment of her worst expectations. Her dilemma and emotional vacillations are humorously and convincingly developed through the four-act seasonal structure of the film, culminating in her decision to 'get a life' in the 'Spring' section (significantly subtitled 'Life') by opting for separation. Fortunately, the temptation to be overly optimistic about Antonio's hang-dog pursuit of a reconciliation, and his apparently sincere intention to change his behaviour, is deftly avoided; the open-endedness of the final scene allows the film to end on an appealing note of romantic warmth without compromising Carmen's re-assertion of her independence, self-respect and strength of character.

Rikki Morgan

Fausto

France 1992

Director: Rémy Duchemin

Certificate
15
Distributor
Mayfair Entertainment
Production Company
Lili Productions/BBD
Productions/France 2
Cinema
In association with
Soficas Investimage 4/
Sofinergie 3
With the participation
of Centre National de
la Cinématographie/
Canal Plus
Producers
Joël Foulon
Daniel Daujon
Production Co-ordinator
Christine Husson
Production Manager
Christine de Jekel
Assistant Director
Jérôme Navarro
Casting
Pierre Amzallag
Screenplay
Richard Morgiève
Rémy Duchemin
Based on the novel by
Richard Morgiève
Dialogue
Richard Morgiève
Continuity
Jocelyne Rivière
Director of Photography
Yves Lafaye
Camera Operators
Norbert Scanella
Patrick Allombert
2nd Unit:
Dominique Bouilleret
Editor
Maryline Monthieux
Art Directors
Fouillet and Wieber
Set Design
Gilbert Druot
Set Dressers
Dominique Beaucamps
Marie Gandois
Costume Design
Annie Périer
Fausto's costumes:
Philippe Guillotel
Jean Yarne:
Ermenegildo Zegna
Wardrobe
Laurence Royer
Bernard Minne

Make-up
Odile Fourquin
Hair stylist
Sylvie Matheret
Music
Denis Barbier
Sound Recordists
Michel Kharat
Thierry Delor
Sound Engineers
Alain Cluzeau
Benoît Plassard
Sound Effects
Pascal Chauvin
Pascal Dedeye
Stunt Co-ordinator
Daniel Vérité

Cast
Jean Yanne
Mietek
Ken Higelin
Fausto
Florence Darel
Tonie
François Hautesserre
Raymond
Maurice Bénichou
Lucien
Bruce Myers
Roger
Marianne Groves
Myriam
Maïté Nahyr
Rivka
Arthur H
Max the Cat
François Châtot
Director
Frédérique Leyes
Max's Girlfriend
Alfred Cohen
Boss
Renaud Ménager
Le Rouquin
Arnaud Churin
Rouge Gorge
Georges de Caunes
TV Journalist
Sir Ali
Voice

7,353 feet
82 minutes

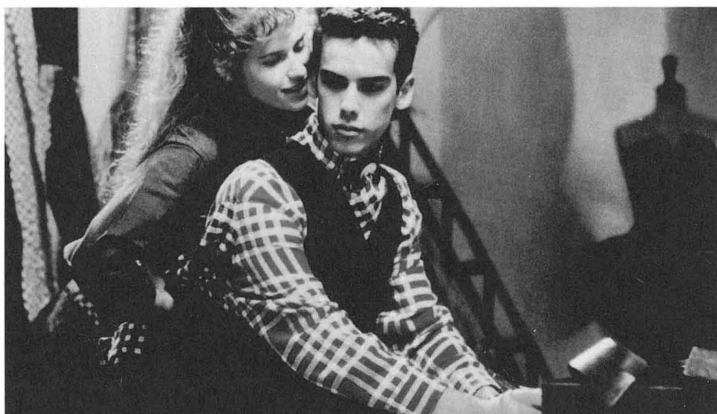
In colour

Subtitles

Paris, 1965. 17-year-old Fausto Barbarico, the son of Italian immigrants, has recently lost both his parents. He goes to an orphanage where he is bullied, but is befriended by the obese Raymond, whose speciality is playing fart tunes. Fausto is taken on by Mietek, a tailor in the Jewish quarter, who teaches him his trade. He explains that everything in tailoring centres on a good presentation of the stomach, and advises Fausto to steal ends of cloth when he is not looking. Fausto decides he wants to be a famous woman's couturier.

Obsessed with women, Fausto and Raymond make hundreds of elaborate paper flowers and send them with passionate love letters to the women of the quarter. The women are flattered and Fausto becomes something of a local celebrity. While he is strolling through the quarter, a beautiful girl on a balcony catches his eye.

On the way to buy fabric, Mietek's



The cut of their cloth: Florence Darel, Ken Higelin

car breaks down. He and Fausto take it to a mechanic, whose daughter, Tonie, turns out to be the beautiful girl. Fausto strikes a deal whereby Mietek gets his car repaired in return for making the mechanic a suit and his daughter a dress. While being measured, Tonie lets Fausto touch her breasts.

One night, Fausto stays late in the workshop and makes himself a suit out of grass. He wears it around town to advertise for Mietek's shop. A local spiv, Max the Cat, offers Mietek 5000 francs for grass suits, for a pop group he manages. Meanwhile, Raymond is offered an apprenticeship by Mietek's friend, a kosher butcher. He too develops an advertising gimmick – a costume consisting of a cow's head on a table. But while wearing it, he gets over-excited and is knocked down by a passing car. In hospital, Raymond lies in a coma. Fausto makes a pact with God to give up smoking if Raymond opens his eyes. Raymond wakes and is released from hospital a few days later.

Mietek and the butcher decide to adopt the two orphans and give them their own room. Fausto gets his name on the door of the tailor's shop, as Mietek's partner. In a search for 'le style Barbarico', Fausto makes Tonie into a junk sculpture in her father's garage. They make love. From now on, Raymond is forced to sleep outside the boys' room. The Barbarico style of large patchwork designs soon becomes the talk of the town. Max the Cat advises Fausto to learn to love money and advises him to eat a banknote a day. This gives him the idea of making clothes out of money. When he and Tonie wear the money-clothes at the opening night of a concert, they are a great success. Tonie is pregnant and Fausto asks her to marry him.

A peculiar quirk of the French film industry is that there are enormous subsidies available for people to make first films. *Fausto*, the debut feature by advert director Rémy Duchemin, is a typical product of this system: a mildly appealing film school idea stretched to feature length.

There are some rather charming set-pieces, but even these would have shown up to better advantage in a *court-métrage*. For example, when Fausto visits Raymond in hospital to tell him that he has lost his virginity, the nurses and doctors break into a rendi-

tion of Beethoven's Fifth. In a shorter film, this would have been quite amusing, but by the time this scene is reached, the sexual adventures of the pimply twosome have already become tiresome beyond belief. Most of the rest of the film is padded with stock Parisian clichés straight from advertising: a rooftop scene with a dark blue night sky backdrop; a hustling, bustling all-life-is-there bridge scene; and a couple of scenes in the Lutèce Arena in the Latin Quarter. This last setting is so improbably cinogenic that you can't help thinking it has been used in desperation to rescue an otherwise unwatchable film.

According to the publicity, the film is supposed to be "a fairy tale for the twentieth century." At the beginning of the film, Fausto even appears to have magical powers. When he first arrives at the orphanage, he is bullied by his room-mates and with sheer force of will persuades them that he has poisoned them. This is quite promising, but then Duchemin, who is also the scriptwriter, simply seems to have forgotten that he has given Fausto any such powers. The only time we see Fausto use them again is when he wishes Raymond would open his eyes after his accident. Even here it is unclear whether there is any causal link, or whether Fausto is just doing what any kid would do if his best friend were lying in a coma. It is probably wise to credit the director with enough intelligence to have intended this scene as the resurrection scene that links Fausto to his namesake, but it is by no means certain.

But the worst of the film's many faults is its cloying nostalgia. No-one expects this kind of light comedy to be an accurate portrayal of period, but there are real liberties taken here. During this period, Italians were a badly-paid underclass in France, much as North Africans are today. The idea that life in the 60s was a riot for Italian orphans and their Jewish employers just does not wash.

The French film industry produces so many films that every now and again it throws up something of genuine interest. The trouble is that for every *Les Nuits fauves*, there are a hundred *Faustos*. And *Fausto* is like one of its hero's technicolour-dreamcoat designs – motley.

Martin Bright

The Getaway

USA 1994

Director: Roger Donaldson

Certificate 18
Distributor Warner Bros
Production Company Largo Entertainment
In association with JVC Entertainment
A Turman-Foster Company/John Alan Simon production
Producers David Foster
Lawrence Turman
John Alan Simon
Associate Producer Marilyn Vance
Production Co-ordinator Valerie Mickaelian
Kucera
Unit Production Manager Jack Roe
Location Managers Richard A. Klotz
Robert Foulkes
Assistant Directors Joel B. Segal
Philip A. Patterson
Alex Kramarchuk
Casting Michael Fenton
Allison Cowitt
ADR Voice: Barbara Harris
Screenplay Walter Hill
Amy Jones
Based on the novel by Jim Thompson
Script Supervisor Sharron Reynolds
Director of Photography Peter Menzies Jr
2nd Unit Director of Photography Peter Levy
Camera/Steadicam Operator James Muro
Editor Conrad Buff
Production Designer Joseph Nemecek III
Art Director Dan Olekiewicz
Set Design W. M. Law III
Set Decorator R. W. "Inke" Intlekofer
Set Dressers Larry D. Koszalkovsky
Syd Moore
Herb Morris
Storyboard Artist John Mann
Special Effects Co-ordinator Phil Cory
Special Effects Ray Svedin
Richard Cory
Steve Galich
Rocky Gehr
Costume Design Marilyn Vance
Associate: Dan Lester
Costume Supervisor Lisa Lovaas
Make-up Artists Carl Fullerton
Jack Freeman
Robert Norin
Hairstylists Rick Provenzano
Marilyn Patricia
Phillips
Title Design R/Greenberg Associates
West
Titles/Opticals Pacific Title
Music Mark Isham
Music Conductor/Orchestrations Ken Kugler
Music Supervisor Danny Bramson
Music Editor Craig Pettigrew
Music Co-ordinator Gary Jones
Songs "Carmelita", "Si tu me quieres" by David White; "Now And Forever" by and performed by Richard Marx
Supervising Sound Editor Jay Boekelheide
Dialogue Editors Stephen Adrianson
Edward D. Callahan
Gloria D'Alessandro
Michael D. Magill
Sound Mixer Richard Bryce
Goodman
ADR Mixers Thomas O'Connell
Robert Deschaine
Foley Mixer Eric Thompson
Scoring Mixer Stephen Krause
Sound Recordist Mark "Fritto" Long
ADR Recordists Rick Canelli
Tami Tredwell
Foley Recordist Linda Lew
Sound Re-recording Mixers Michael Minkler
Bob Beemer
Gregg Landaker
Sound Effects Editors Richard M. Burton
Kim Christensen
Clayton R. Collins
Malcolm F. Fife
Samuel H. Hinckley
Tim Holland
Marilyn McCoppen
E. Jeane Putnam
Robert Shoup
Ethan Van der Ryn
Jennifer L. Ware
Marian Wilde
Mark Jan
Wlodarkiewicz
Foley Artists Jennifer Myers
Margie O'Malley
Stunt Co-ordinator Glenn R. Wilder
Cast
Alex Baldwin
Doc McCoy
Kim Basinger
Carol McCoy
Michael Madsen
Rudy Travis
James Woods
Jack Benyon
David Morse
Jim Deer Jackson
Jennifer Tilly
Fran Carvey
James Stephens
Harold Carvey
Richard Farnsworth
Slim
Philip Hoffman
Frank Hansen
Burton Gilliam
Gollie
Royce D. Applegate
Gun Shop Salesman
Daniel Villareal
Mendoza
Scott McKenna
Red Shirt
Alex Colon
Ramon
Justin Williams
Soldier
Peppi Sanders
Bookkeeper
Jo Ann Soto
Woman on Train

Louis Martinez
Train Station Cop
Boots Southerland
Cab Driver
Maurice Orozco
Customs Official
George Dobbs
City Jail Guard
Kenny Endoso
Sheriff's Van Driver
Don Pulford
Guard in Counting Room
Rick Taylor
Porter
Phil Allen
Bill Mosley
Debbie Dedo
Newscasters
Gary Kirk
Policeman
J. W. "Corky" Fornoff
Pilot
Peter Donaldson
Boy in Café
Michele Hawk
Waitress
Sam Hernandez
Bartender
10,395 feet
115 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour
DeLuxe
Anamorphic

Carter 'Doc' McCoy and his wife Carol plan and execute a job with partner-in-crime Rudy Butler, which involves springing a prisoner from jail and returning him to his family in Mexico. Everything goes according to plan, but when the felon is delivered to his family, he is summarily executed for dishonourable behaviour. McCoy is allowed to leave with his payment, but on his arrival at the airport the police are waiting for him. Carol and Rudy get away but McCoy is jailed for robbery. In jail, McCoy reaches breaking point and instructs Carol to make contact with Jack Benyon. Benyon has the means to buy back McCoy's freedom in return for his involvement in Benyon's next heist. Doc is freed, but in the meantime Carol has started a relationship with Benyon as part of the price of Doc's release.

Rudy is recruited by Benyon for the greyhound track robbery, which is successfully carried out. However, the third member of the gang gets jumpy and shoots a security guard. In the getaway, Rudy shoots him and arrives at the rendezvous to wait for Doc and Carol, intending to shoot them too. Anticipating the double cross, Doc shoots Rudy first, and he and Carol head for Benyon's ranch. There, Benyon tells Doc that he has been set up and that he and Carol are having an affair; but Carol shoots him, and she and Doc leave with the money.

Meanwhile, the injured Rudy drives to an isolated veterinary surgeon's and demands medical attention and transport to the border town where he expects to catch up with Doc and Carol. The vet, Harold Clinton, is forced to comply, but his bored wife Fran helps Rudy, relishing the excitement of being a gangster's moll. On the journey south, Harold commits suicide while Rudy and Fran have sex in a cheap motel.

Doc and Carol are also heading ►



Going, going, gone: Baldwin, Basinger

◀ for the border hotel where their false passports are waiting. On the way, they fight about Carol's relationship with Benyon, but are reconciled and decide to continue their journey by train. At the station, Carol drops off the money in the left luggage lockers, but is the victim of a con man who steals the bag.

Doc and Carol spot the thief boarding a train and Doc goes after him. After a struggle, Doc retrieves the money and returns to pick up Carol. Later, the thief is picked up by the police, who realise that Doc is behind the greyhound track robbery and Benyon's death. Doc's picture is released to the press; he is subsequently recognised and he and Carol have to escape in a stolen car. They stop to buy guns but are chased by the police.

When they finally arrive at the hotel, they are unaware that Rudy is waiting for them. However, Doc becomes suspicious and is prepared when Rudy comes for him. Benyon's mob are also on Doc's trail; in the ensuing shoot-out, they and Rudy are all killed. Doc and Carol escape and hijack a truck belonging to an old man known as the Cowboy; with his help, they drive over the border into Mexico. Doc and Carol drive off to freedom and a new life together without crime.

● *Amor vincit omnia* is the moral behind this heist-gone-right tale, but all the force of the Sam Peckinpah original is missing. The first screen appearance of the crime-does-pay theme caused moral outrage in 1972, but while this theme is still and always will be an issue, something has gone wrong in the remake. In Peckinpah's hands, the audience is brought to a point of genuine sympathy and identification with the two central characters, the trembly Ali McGraw and the bullish, inarticulate Steve McQueen; the ending thus gets a satisfying and uncomplicated emotional uplift. Under Roger Donaldson's direction, crime is glamorised by the use of sweaty Kim Basinger and hunky Alec Baldwin. The result – moral confusion.

In the original version all the elements come together – the script, the McQueen/McGraw partnership, the Clinton/Butler relationship, the journey south and the heist itself. The chalk-and-cheese contrast in directorial styles is nowhere more apparent than in the prison scenes, which in the Peckinpah version open the action. Peckinpah's film is shot in semi-documentary style: animals graze on scrub land and the camera rises to reveal some long low institutional buildings. There is little dialogue and much of the sequence is in long shot, with McQueen's no-acting acting style perfectly complementing the director's intention to create a believable portrait of the dreariness of prison life. In the remake, Donaldson goes for broke with barbed wire, armed guards, prison rats, mistreatment and big close-ups. The whole show is over-dramatised and heavy-handed in its attempt to

enhance the original – a directorial strategy which continues throughout the entire film.

By using Basinger and Baldwin, two of the most bankable Hollywood stars, Donaldson presumably hoped to create an equivalent to the earlier film's star partnership; but with the camera lingering on cleavage and biceps rather than the global picture, the real drama is reduced. Donaldson also fails to understand that sexual chemistry is not the same as love. Peckinpah, paradoxically for the man who made *The Wild Bunch*, not only recognises the difference between physical and emotional responses but also manages to convey it by contrasting the Doc/Carol relationship with its degenerate and corrupted form in the Fran/Rudy coupling. And like all great directors, Peckinpah makes the comparison apparently effortlessly.

Peckinpah's reputation has always, perhaps unjustly, been linked with the violence of his movies. But, again paradoxically, his version of *The Getaway* is not as ugly as Donaldson's. And yet Al Lettieri's original Rudy is by a long stretch a more unpleasant and menacing character than his 1994 ponytailed equivalent. Similarly, Donaldson loses his nerve in Harold Clinton's suicide scene, having Rudy discover him hanging in the bathroom. In Peckinpah's film, Rudy and Fran are filmed making love through the dangling legs of Harold, who in ghoulishly voyeuristic style is strung up next to their bed. The contrast gives real force to that over-worked notion of gratuitous violence which characterises the Donaldson version. Again, it is the big close-up which does the damage.

The most astonishing link between the two films is Walter Hill's script. The 1994 *Getaway* is, in this sense, a faithful remake, with Hill leaving in chunks of dialogue lifted straight from his original screenplay. There is some attempt to bring the script up to date, particularly in the scene where Doc and Carol fight about Benyon. McGraw's dialogue portrays the female as defenceless against raging male jealousy, while Basinger is given feisty lines that meet the macho challenge of her partner. But in the ensuing reconciliation, love not desire is the key to the film's trajectory; McQueen's ability to overcome his emotions speaks love more eloquently than Baldwin's defeat by the feminist argument.

Generally the new mix of Donaldson with the Basinger/Baldwin couple is at odds with Hill's ploy, and the reworked script is, at times, leaden and un compelling. The big question is, why remake *The Getaway*? When Martin Scorsese remade *Cape Fear*, he stood it on its head for the 90s, desanctifying the good and pathologising the bad. This version of *The Getaway* fails to make any such contemporary statement. If you think you've seen it before, that probably has more to do with the fact that this is just another routine heist movie than the fact that you've seen the original.

Jill McGreal

Go Fish

USA 1994

Director: Rose Troche

Certificate

18

Distributor

Mainline Pictures

Production Company

Samuel Goldwyn Company

In association with

Islet Pictures present a

Can I Watch Pictures

production

In association with

KVPI

Executive Producers

Tom Kalin

Christine Vachon

Producers

Rose Troche

Guinevere Turner

Associate Producer

V.S. Brodie

Assistant Director

Wendy Quinn

Screenplay

Guinevere Turner

Rose Troche

Continuity

Rick Powell

Lisa Raymond

Director of Photography

Ann T. Rossetti

Optical Effects

Rose Troche

Opticals

Millenium

Editor

Rose Troche

Title Design

Guinevere Turner

Music

Brendan Dole

Jennifer Sharpe

Additional:

Scott Aldrich

Songs

"Need Your Love"

by Neil Rummey,

A. Heath, performed

by N.R.G.; "From

Withinside Out"

by Nick Michael,

performed by

Tanesha Gray

Sound Editors

Missy Cohen

Dialogue:

Jacob Ribicoff

Sound Recordists

Lisa Hubbard

Elspeth Kydd

ADR:

George Lara

David Novak

Foley:

George Lara

Sound Re-recordist

David Novak

Foley Artist

Brian Vancho

Cast

V.S. Brodie

Ely

Guinevere Turner

Max

T. Wendy McMillan

Kia

Migdalia Melendez

Evy

Anastasia Sharp

Daria

Mary Garvey

Daniella Falcon

Tracy Kimme

Students/Jury Members

Jennifer Allen

Walter Youngblood

Arthur C. Stone

Students

Elspeth Kydd

Angry Student

Brooke Webster

Mel

Mimi Wadell

Mimi

Scout

Haircutter

Susan Gregson

Carolyn Kotlarski

Joanna Brown

Brides/Jury Members

Betty Jeannie Pejko

Evy's Mother

Alfredo Troche

Junior

JoAnne C. Willis

Sam

Jonathan T. Vincent

Boy

Jamika Ajalon

Michele Cullom

Jury Members

Marianna

Herself

Shelly Schneider-Bello

Bella

Stephanie Boles

Alice

Julia LaFleur

Andy

Lisa Raymond

Nina Von Voss

Dinner Guests

Dorothea Reichenbacher

Della

Ahndi

Lisa Baldassari

Jaqueline Brisset

Victoria Brown

Debra Crawford

Sabrina Craig

Stephen Craig

Dainty

Kevin M. Grubb

Elizabeth Hernandez

Pamela Hewett
Mark Houston
Jeanne Kracher
Kelly Krotine
Olga Lopez
Juarez Monaco
Jennifer Morton
Joanne Morton
Rick Powell
Wendy Quinn

Karen Spies
Ann T. Rossetti
Rose Troche
Joe Vidal
Shaniqua Washinton
Additional Cast

7,450 feet

83 minutes

Black and white

● Chicago, the beginning of summer. Max, a young aspiring writer, is looking for love. She shares a house with Kia, a college lecturer, who is happily ensconced with her girlfriend Evy. Max confides to Kia and Evy that she is having problems meeting the right person. Kia suggests to Max that she might like to meet one of her old students, Ely, and sets the two up. Max thinks she is attracted to Ely but the date goes awry when Ely's girlfriend, who now lives in Seattle, calls.

Ely confides to her flatmate Daria about the poor state of her relationship. Days later, Max and Ely meet in a bookshop and shyly talk. The two women become a hot topic of conversation for Kia and her friends. Meanwhile Evy, who has been living with her mother since she split up with her husband, is kicked out of the family home when her mother discovers that she is a lesbian. Consequently she moves in with Kia and Max.

Daria decides to start plotting on Ely's behalf and holds a dinner party to which Max, among others, is invited. The party goes to plan – Max gets on with Ely and asks her out. Later, Ely tells her girlfriend's answering machine that their relationship is over. The night of Max and Ely's big date arrives. Ely arrives at Max's and the two end up making out. The following day their respective flatmates want to know all about the date. As the summer unfolds, Max and Ely fall in love.

● *Go Fish* might be described as a low-budget *When Sally Met Sally*. A perky love story filmed with wonderful elan in black and white, it marks a significant debut for the director Rose Troche and her co-writer and lead Guinevere Turner, who brings an exuberant charm to the role of Max. Filmed over a couple of years on a minuscule budget pulled together by



Hook, line and sinker: Guinevere Turner, V.S. Brodie

the two from their own and their friends' pockets, it has a freshness and energy that belie its long drawn-out inception.

Troche, who also edited the film, has created a piece that flickers with cinematic possibility as she juxtaposes imagery to both lyrical and humorous effect. Thus the director meshes a love scene with one in which a meal is being prepared, cutting away to shots of bread being broken open by hungry hands as the couple start to climax. It is a brazen take on the clichéd connection between food and sex. Troche's flip style works well with Turner's effervescent script, which makes a punchy rap out of girl talk and thoughts. This is typified in the opening scene in which Max bubbles with a stream-of-consciousness musing about a girl she has seen on a bus.

Certainly Troche and Turner follow in the Queer Cinema tradition of their executive producers Christine Vachon (who produced *Poison* and *Swoon*) and Tom Kalin (who directed *Swoon*), in that there is nothing straight about the film's form. The manifest desire to be cinematically different should eclipse the more obvious point that Troche and Turner have come up with a lesbian story that departs from the coming-out narratives of films such as Donna Deitch's *Desert Hearts*. In *Go Fish* the women are happily already assured of their sexuality. They are very much out and about. Indeed, this is a hanging-out sort of film, which makes much use of the irreverent girl rap, with frequent intermissions in the story devoted to Kia and an ever increasing circle of friends gossiping about Max and Ely. Their talking heads provide a festive chorus with many asides on the way to the anticipated consummation of Max and Ely's 'will they or won't they?' affair.

This approach creates a strong sense of a lesbian community, while the flexible digressive style enables Troche and Turner to dive a little deeper under *Go Fish*'s seemingly light, shimmering surface and ponder on some weightier questions about lesbian identity – but without letting the movie get too hung up on them. Kia gives a lecture on lesbians hidden in history, but also ponders on the many euphemisms for the vagina – her favourite being "honey-pot", since "it's sexy without being vulgar". Meanwhile, the roving-eyed Daria defends her decision to sleep with a man for one night, berating a lesbian politics that suggests such an act might mean "her whole life choice becomes suspect".

Indeed, the film acknowledges the shifts in concerns over the last couple of decades for different generations of lesbians by setting up a wry dialogue between the slightly older and politically active Kia and the younger women. There is even a passing discussion about lesbian films. In such a way, *Go Fish* anchors itself in a particular history while marking a new wave in film-making, of which one hopes there will be much to follow.

Lizzie Francke

Hedd Wyn

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Paul Turner

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

S4C

Production Company

Pendefig

For S4C

Producer

Shan Davies

Assistant Directors

Michas Koc

Stephen Woolfenden

Geoff Skelding

Screenplay

Alan Llwyd

Paul Turner

Script Consultants

Dwynwen Berry

Trevor Keates

Continuity

Gillian Ellen

Director of Photography

Ray Orton

2nd Unit Camera

Roger Pugh Evans

Graphic Artist

Pauline Hume

Editor

Chris Lawrence

Set Design

Jane Roberts

Martin Morley

Special Effects

Evan Green Hughes

Steve Breheney

David Williams

Costume Design

Celia Pye

Wardrobe

Maxine Brown

Make-up Designers

Barbara Southcott

Cherry West

Music

John Hardy

Music Performed by

Wales Symphony

Orchestra

Music Extracts

"Urrlicht" by Gustav

Mahler, solo performed

by Penelope Walker;

"In Memoriam" by

R. Williams, performed

by Melisa Mai Annis

Dubbing Editor

Wendy Jones

Sound Mixer

Jeff Mathews

Dubbing Mixer

Dai Shell

Digital Sound Co-ordinator

John Cochran

Foley Artists

Julie Ankeron

John Fewell

Military Consultants

Military Cinesearch

Armourers

Ian Legge

Roger Spear

Cast

Huw Garmon

Ellis Evans/Hedd Wyn

Catrin Fychan

Magi Evans

Ceri Cunningham

Bob Evans

Llio Silyn

Mary Evans

Grey Evans

Evan Evans

Gwen Ellis

Mary Evans

Emma Kelly

Enid Evans

Sioned Jones Williams

Cati Evans

Llyr Joshua

Ifan Evans

Angharad Roberts

Ann Evans

Geraint Roberts

R. Williams Parry

Emlyn Gomer

Morris Davies

Guto Roberts

Eisteddfod Leader

Manon Prysor

Girl

Gruffudd Aled

Griff Jones

Derec Brown

Reverend J. D. Richards

Arwel Gruffydd

William Morris

Sue Roderick

Lizzie Roberts

Lydia Griffiths

Organist

J. O. Jones

Recruiting Vicar

Richard Viner

Escapee

Mark Rowlands

English Soldier

Llion Jones

Singer in the Pub

Judith Humphreys

Jini Owen

Sian Summers

Gwen Williams

Nia Dryhurst

Mary Catherine Hughes

Tony Jones

One-eyed Soldier

Ieuan Wyn Roberts

Armless Soldier

Brendan Charleson

Elor Glududdy

Doc O'Brien

Mr Kirby

Eric Wyn

Vicar at the Tribunal

Richard Beale

Army Representative

Roger McKern

Sergeant

Kim Goddard

Litherland Medical

Officer

Gwyn Vaughan

Owen Hughes

Phil Reid

Fred Hainge

Dylan Jones Roberts

Bob Morris

Dafydd Edmwnd

Training Sergeant

Ray Davies

Battleground Medical

Officer

Jack James

Censoring Officer

Terry Victor

Major

Dafydd Rowlands

Voice of Archdruid

Dyfed

Richard Ellyn

Other Voices

David Hawson

David Morgan

Alan Pritchard

Steve Credland

Toby Goddard

Clive Johns

Karl Nicholas

Andrew Kirkhouse

Dyfed Williams

John Probert

Lyndon Sullivan

Gareth Roberts

Mike Rowlands

David Taylor

Neville Phillips

John Priestly

Vic Nurton

Chris Urack

Simon Clarke

Steven Hall

Steve Edwards

Andrew Storey

Anthony Stenson

Andy Baker

Jamie Rutherford

Peter Owen

Llyr Huws Griffiths

Dafydd Wyn Hughes

9,900 feet

110 minutes

In colour

Welsh dialogue

Subtitles



Poetry in motion: Sue Roderick, Huw Garmon

● The Battle of Passchendaele. A soldier reminisces as he lies wounded... Ellis Evans is a farmer's son living in North Wales shortly before the First World War. He is beginning to earn recognition for his poetry, which he writes under the pseudonym Hedd Wyn. He spends his days helping in the fields, writing, drinking in the pub with his friends and meeting his girlfriend Lizzie Roberts. She wants to marry him, but he is not so sure. Ellis fails in his first attempt to win the Chair at the Eisteddfod.

As war looms, the great recruiting drive begins. Ellis refuses to join the army on the grounds that he is incapable of killing. Lizzie accuses him of being a coward and their relationship ends. Ellis starts a romance with another woman, Jini Owen. He continues to write, but feels his verse is meaningless when thousands are dying in the trenches. The recruiting officer turns up at the farm. Ellis' mother, who has already lost relatives and friends in the bloodshed, tries to hide him, but his sister accidentally reveals his whereabouts. He and his father are brought before a hearing and told that one man from the family must enlist. Although his 18-year-old brother Bob wants to become a soldier, Ellis decides the responsibility is his.

After an arduous training period, Ellis and his unit are dispatched to the front. He receives permission from a sceptical English officer to send his new poem to the Eisteddfod. Ellis is wounded in battle... After Ellis dies in a military hospital, his family receive a telegram informing them that he has won the Chair at the Eisteddfod.

● Hedd Wyn, the Armageddon poet, may be a legendary figure in Welsh literary history, but there's no denying that before his tragic death at Passchendaele in 1917, he led a singularly uneventful life. Basically, he wrote poetry, had a few affairs and worked on the family farm – scarcely material for a conventional biopic. In the circumstances, screenwriter Alan Llwyd and director Paul Turner have gone for an impressionistic approach. This is telluric film-making taken to extremes – the hills, fields and rivers of North Wales are filmed lovingly and at length, playing as important a part as any of the cast. Llwyd is himself a poet, has won two Eisteddfods and is Hedd Wyn's biographer. His script portrays

its protagonist as a symbolic figure: Hedd Wyn is the archetypal Celtic bard, and the fact that he fell in battle lends his story all the more resonance.

The film opens with the poet being shot and then unfolds in flashback. Whispered voice-overs recite his verse as he excavates his past, and there is a recurring motif of a mysterious, wraith-like woman dressed in veils who presages his death and is also his muse. In a key scene, as he stands outside the farmhouse smoking his pipe and staring at the night sky, he tells his sister that he is inspired by Arianrhod, the Celtic goddess of the moon: "On nights like this, she writes for me. She fires my imagination and guides my hand. She opens her universe to me." Such mystical stuff makes for slightly strained dialogue, and the film-makers might have done better to abandon narrative structure altogether. After all, the events depicted are seen through the eyes of the poet as he lies dying on the battlefield – they should be subjective and fractured. Hedd Wyn's everyday domestic arrangements are largely irrelevant.

Turner, though, retains at least the vestiges of a story. To compensate for the lack of drama in Hedd Wyn's pre-war life, he counterpoints the film's more self-consciously poetic moments with naturalistic set-pieces featuring the surfeit of costume and design detail you find in heritage museums, with characters decked out in breeches and tweed caps and soldiers wearing the correct number of buttons on their tunics. Such conservatism goes against the grain of the formal experimentalism found elsewhere. Still, *Hedd Wyn* unfolds at a gentle pace and is as dreamily romantic as its hero – Huw Garmon plays the poet with a beatific smile on his face throughout. Nothing fazes him or dampens his idealism – not even the prospect of death.

Critics who overlooked the picture when it first appeared on the festival circuit in 1992 have suggested, with characteristic bad grace, that its Academy Awards nomination as best foreign film this year owed more to tokenism and lobbying than to merit. Whatever the inner workings of the Academy, *Hedd Wyn* surely deserves its belated recognition, if only for the consummate way in which it is crafted and its naive, ambitious attempt to put poetry on the screen.

Geoffrey Macnab

Hostile Hostages

USA 1994

Director: Ted Demme

Certificate
15

Distributor
Buena Vista

Production Company
Touchstone Pictures
A Don Simpson/
Jerry Bruckheimer
production

Executive Producers
Don Simpson
Jerry Bruckheimer

Producers
Ron Bozman
Richard LaGravenese
Jeff Weiss

Production Co-ordinator
Deborah Zwickler

Unit Production Manager
Marilyn Stonehouse

Location Managers
Fred Kamping
Marc Dassas

Post-production Supervisor
Judith Lyn Brown

Assistant Directors
Andrew Shea
William Spahic
Michael Johnson
Ron Oxley
Anne-Marie Ferney

Casting
Howard Feuer
Associate:
Nicole Arbusto
Canada:
Deirdre Bowen

Screenplay
Richard LaGravenese
Marie Weiss

Story
Marie Weiss

Script Supervisor
Blanche McDermaid

Director of Photography
Adam Kimmel

Camera Operator
Andy Chmura

Editor
Jeffrey Wolf

Associate Editor
John Gilroy

Production Designer
Dan Davis

Art Director
Dennis Davenport

Set Decorator
Jaro Dick

Scenic Artist
Tim Murton

Special Effects
Bob Hall
Arthur Langevin

Costume Design
Judithanna Makovsky

Wardrobe Supervisor
Patricia Unger

Make-up Artists
Irene Kent
Christine Hart

Hairstylist
David R. Beecroft

Title Design
Balsmeyer & Everett

Titles/Opticals
Reel Effects
Janos O. Pilenyi

Music
David A. Stewart

Music Performed by
The London
Metropolitan Orchestra
The Choristers of
Reigate St Mary's
Choir School

Music Arrangements
Matthias Gohl
Robert Elhai

Music Producers
David A. Stewart
Stephen McLaughlin

Music Production Supervisor
Eileen Drosin Gregory

Music Editor
Todd Kasow

Music Consultant
Amanda Scheer

Songs/Music Extracts
"A Holly Jolly
Christmas" by Johnny
Marks, performed by
Burl Ives; "The Holly
and the Ivy" (traditional);
"Christmas Comes But
Once a Year"; "It's
Christmas, You're
Drunk And You're in
Jail" by and performed
by Adam Roth;
"Tomorrow We Live"
by Robert Farnon; "The
Christmas Song" by
Mel Torme, Robert
Wells, "O Little Town
of Bethlehem"
(traditional), "Adeste
Fideles" (traditional),
performed by Nat King
Cole; "Please Come
Home For Christmas"
by Gene Redd, Charles
Brown, performed by
Lou Ann Barton; "Get a
Life" by and performed
by David A. Stewart;
"It's a Cold, Cold
Christmas"; "You Put
the X in Christmas"
by Lou Marini,
performed by "Nuff
Bros. Band; "Blue
Christmas" by Billy
Hayes, Jay Johnson,
performed by Joyce
Cobb; "Welcome to the
Suburbs" by David A.
Stewart, Shara Nelson,
performed by Shara
Nelson; "Broken
Circles" by Ké Grivois,
Bruce Roberts, Maurice
Gallegos, performed
by Ké Grivois

Supervising Sound Editor
Stuart Levy

Dialogue Editor
John Purcell

ADR Editors
Gail Stockton
Group:
Kenton Jakob

Foley Editor
Jac Rubenstein

Sound Mixer
Bruce Carwardine

**Dolby stereo
consultant:**
Bradford L. Hohle

Sound Re-recording Mixer
Peter Waggoner

Foley Artists
Elisha Birnbaum
Brian Vancho

Stunt Co-ordinator
Branko Racki

Film Extract
It's a Wonderful Life
(1946)

Cast
Denis Leary
Gus
Judy Davis
Caroline Chasseur
Kevin Spacey
Lloyd Chasseur
Robert J. Steinmiller Jr
Jesse Chasseur
Glynis Johns
Rose
Raymond J. Barry
Lieutenant Huff
Richard Bright
Murray
Christine Baranski
Connie
Adam LeFevre
Gary
Phillip Nicol
John
Ellie Raab
Mary

Bill Raymond
George
John Scurti
Steve
Jim Turner
Phil
Rutanya Alda
Linda
Herbie Ade
Bartender
Ron Gabriel
Limo Driver
Scott Walker
Prosecutor
Edward Saxon
Reporter
Donna Holgate
Newscaster
Kenneth Utt
Jeremiah Willard
Marilyn Stonehouse
Store Cashier
Victoria Mitchell
Store Customer
Cort Day
Salvation Army
Volunteer
Robert Ridgely
Bob Burley
Charles Kerr
Derek Keurvorst
Caroline Yeager
Town Citizens
J. K. Simmons
Siskel
Max Piersig
Victor Erdos
Cadets
John Benjamin Hickey
James Burke
Chris Phillips
Stephen Hunter
Old Baybrook
Policemen

Arthur Nascarella
Vincent Pastore
Tony Craig
Robert Collins
Peter Krantz
Robert Kroonenberg
Philip Arkin
State Troopers
Marilyn Smith
Richard Blackburn
Mark Cregan
John E. Campbell
Ceciley Carroll
Denise Pidgeon
Chas Lawther
Lance Paton
Timm Zemanek
Jane Moffat
Jacelyn Holmes
Santa Families
Grace Church on the Hill
Choir
Boys Choir

8,699 feet
97 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor

US title:
The Ref

Christmas Eve in the affluent Connecticut suburb of Old Baybrook. While Caroline and Lloyd Chasseur attend Doctor Wong's marriage counselling clinic, Gus, a working-class burglar, breaks into a safe at the Willard mansion. Filmed on video, sprayed with cat piss, attacked by a rotweiler, and left to his own devices by his low-life getaway man, Gus escapes arrest by kidnapping Caroline and Lloyd. Holding the still-bickering couple hostage in their luxurious home, Gus learns the Chasseurs are expecting Lloyd's relatives for Christmas Eve dinner. As the police search for the burglar, the Chasseurs' son, Jesse, reluctantly arrives from military school where he has been blackmailing his teacher over some compromising photographs.

Tied together, Caroline and Lloyd find the bounds of matrimony have not been altogether severed. While Jesse remains still tied by Gus in his room, Gus unties Caroline and Lloyd so that they can entertain Lloyd's miserly and domineering mother and his brother's family. After dinner, as useless presents are exchanged, Caroline gets drunk and various home truths are revealed. Naturally, it falls upon Gus, posing as Doctor Wong, to keep order. By the end of the evening, the family makes a stand against Lloyd's mother. As the police close in, the Chasseurs unite as a family to help Gus escape.

From the Capra-like opening – camera pans over shop-fronts, up to Doctor Wong's window – the film's warning seems obvious: commodity fetishism can cause discord and dysfunction. Yet *Hostile Hostages*, directed with conservative panache, is

less about consumerism than contemporary family values in an era dominated by psycho-babble, greed and corruption. Though director Ted Demme, like Capra, exalts the individual, his drawing-room comedy scrapes the barrel for its final feel-good approach to deviancy and class.

With a script that alternates between witticism and cliché, *Hostile Hostages* has some humorous moments and caustic, though politically safe, dialogue – especially as delivered by Judy Davis, who upstages everyone as a sharp-tongued and neurotic yuppie. Gus, played by comedian Denis Leary – type-cast but uncomfortably required to stray from his usual caustic persona – listens to Caroline and Lloyd's bickering and realises his worst nightmare has come true: "Great," he says, "I've kidnapped my fucking parents." When he orders Caroline to do what he says because "I have a gun," she replies, "But we have people coming for dinner." Meanwhile, a group of policemen gather round the television to watch Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life*. So involved are they in the film that when the video showing Gus robbing the Willard mansion arrives, they inadvertently tape Capra over the incriminating evidence.

Toying with deviancy, *Hostile Hostages* might sometimes be mistaken for a collaboration between Disney and Joe Orton. For Gus is too nice to be an authentic sociopath, while Jesse's blackmailing scheme is viewed as a mere peccadillo. In fact, Gus' smoking habits, and his corruption of Caroline who is driven back to the dreaded weed, constitute the film's only real deviant behaviour.

As a surrogate son, Gus may show more interest in smoking than in making sexual advances towards Caroline, but his private talks with Jesse possibly insinuate something more than brotherly love – perhaps caused by Leary's awkward transformation from tough guy to nice guy.

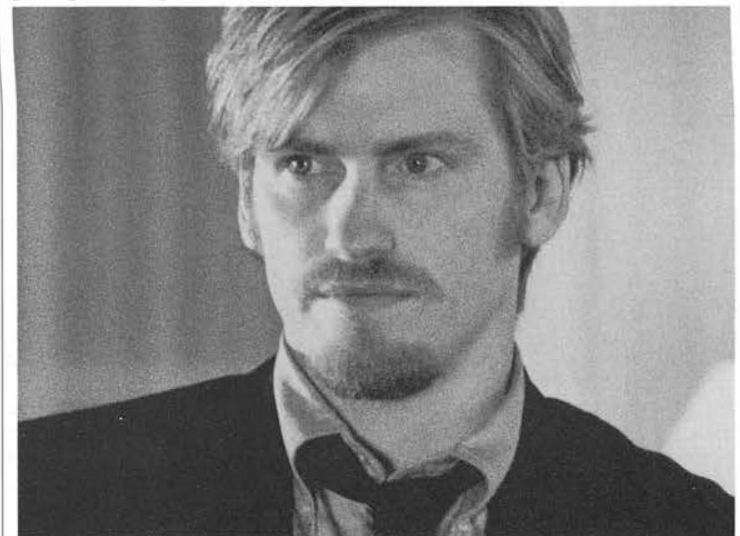
But in saving the marriage, Gus cramps everyone's style. Having described a dream to Doctor Wong in which Lloyd's head is on a platter, his penis protruding from his ear, Caro-

line is censoriously told by Gus that "dreams are private." Asked about his therapy technique, Gus, posing as Wong, says, "I just tell them they're wacko. They like to hear it." In a final therapeutic act, Lloyd's mother is also bound and gagged, and Gus escapes, presumably to another family needing rough trade and light bondage. Helping Gus get away, Lloyd says, "I can't spend my life sending everyone I care about to prison." Whether admitting he's entrapped his family, declaring his affection for Gus, or hinting that he planned to have his son arrested, Lloyd's born-again humanity is regarded with suspicion – at least by Jesse, who tells Gus, "Things will be different with Dad. If not, I can always blackmail him."

Originally titled *The Ref*, but renamed so that British viewers would not mistake it for a football film, *Hostile Hostages* is as much about cultural references as referees. Tightly edited, and shot for the most part within the Chasseur household, the film notes the family's paintings, CDs, knick-knacks, and a copy of *A History of Western Philosophy* that sits on the bedside table. It's the film's sense of enclosure and concentration on objects that makes Gus' wide-angled moonlit escape through the snow appear so dreamlike and reminiscent of Adolfo Mekas' underground classic *Hallelujah the Hills*.

Lightweight and proscenium-oriented, *Hostile Hostages* might be worth seeing for its quirky and commodity-oriented view of suburban life, or for the way Davis fires off lines such as, "You think death scares me? You forget I've been married to him for 15 years." But the film fails to deliver what its opening scenes suggest. Homage it may be, but Demme's film is neither as innocent nor as democratic as Capra. And, other than Davis' and Leary's most dedicated fans, for whom is this film actually intended? Is it a feel-good film for deviant adolescents, or merely some kind of broken-family entertainment? After all, it will take more than an eventful Christmas Eve to rehabilitate the myth or remedy the dysfunctions of middle-class family life.

Woody Haut



Smokin' gun: Denis Leary

Huevos de oro (Golden Balls)

Spain 1993

Director: Bigas Luna

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Metro Tartan

Production Company

Lolafilms

In association with

Ovideo T.V.

Co-produced with

Filmauro/Hugo Films/

Lumière (France)

With the collaboration

of Antena 3 Television

Executive Producer

Andrés Vicente Gomez

Co-producers

Aurelio Di Laurentiis

Xavier Gelin

Stéphane Marsil

Associate Producers

Manuel Lombardero

Pepo Sol

Production Manager

Marivi de Villanueva

Assistant Directors

Eusebio Graciani

Pau de la Sierra

Italy:

Edmondo Amati

Casting

Consol Tura

Barcelona:

Pilar Raventós

Benidorm:

José y May Fernández

Paris:

Nora Habib

Miami:

Meris Zitman

Screenplay

Cuca Canals

Bigas Luna

Continuity

Cecilia Moliné

Director of Photography

José Luis Alcaine

Camera Operators

Julio Madurga

2nd Unit:

Luis Colombo

Xavi Giménez

Daniel Caño

Editor

Carmen Frías

Video Editors

Lola Serrano

Santi Borrícón

Art Director

Antxón Gómez

Set Design

Balter Gallart

Set Decorator

Irene Montcada

Special Effects Supervisor

Poli Cantero

Costume Design

Neus Olivella

Make-up

Betty De Villanueva

Hair

Satur Merino

Title Logo Design

Federic Amat

Titles/Opticals

Story Film/Pablo Núñez

Music

Nicola Piovani

Music Performed by

Orchestra della Unione

Musici Di Roma

Cello Soloist:

Francesca Taviani

Songs/Music Extracts

"Achilipu" by

J. Castellón,

F. Campuzano,

performed by Sara;

"Por el amor de una

mujer" by Jesús

González López, Dani

Daniel, performed

by Julio Iglesias;

"Bailando" by Chein

García Alonso,

performed by Frankie

Ruiz; "Didi" performed

by Groupe Rai Nord

Johsin, Rachid el

Nadori; "Only You" by

Ram Buck, Rand Ande

Sound

Marc-A Beldent

Dubbing

France:

Marie Robert

Sound Mixer

José Antonio Bermúdez

Dialogue Recordist

Marco Bermúdez

Cast

Javier Bardem

Benito Gonzalez

Maria De Medeiros

Marta (45 kilos)

Maribel Verdu

Claudia (the mistress,

52 kilos)

Elisa Touati

Rita (the first love,

47 kilos)

Raquel Blanca

Ana, the maneater

Alessandro Gassmann

Melilla's friend

Benicio del Toro

Bob, the friend

from Miami

Francesco Ma Dominado

Mosca

Albert Vidal

Father-in-Law

Angel de Andrés López

Gil with the Chickpeas

Alicia Moro

Gil's Girl

Enric Cusi

Trustworthy Man

Paco Casares

The Producer

Maria Martín

The Producer's Wife

Thomas Luth

American Hunk

Alberto Merelles

The Architect

Elisabeth Escayola

The Mother-in-Law

Stella Condorelli

Rita's Friend

Ingrid Morrall

Ana's Friend

Ismael de Carlo

The Detective

Ecos de Andalucía

Flamenco Group

8,550 feet

95 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Anamorphic

Subtitles

While doing military service in Melilla, Morocco, Benito Gonzalez dreams of someday building a skyscraper, marrying his girlfriend Rita, and living in a house with a bidet. When Rita leaves him for his best friend Miguel, Benito is distraught; nevertheless, he is determined to suc-

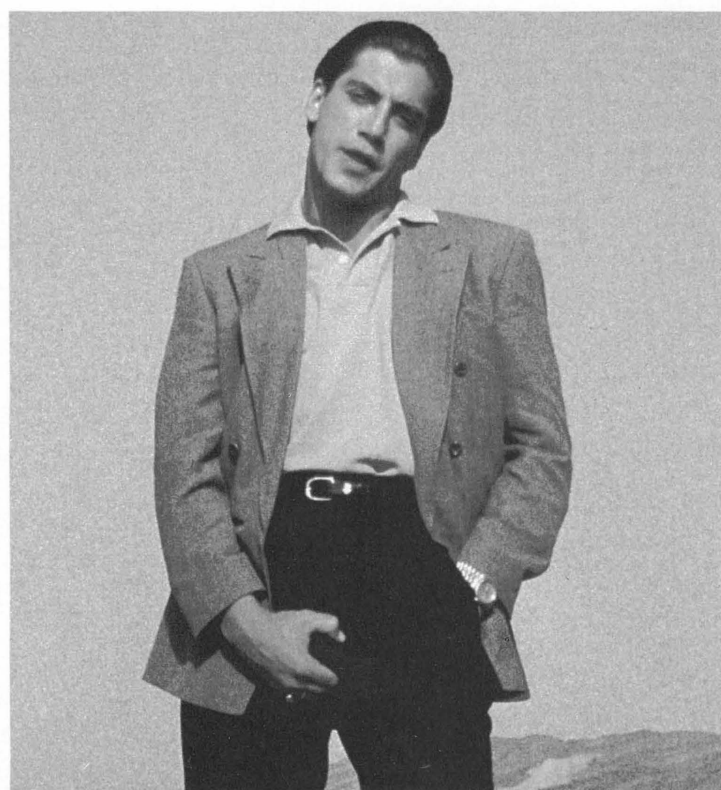
ceed in spite of them.

Some time later, in Benidorm, Benito and Rita's brother Mosca have set up a construction business. They have acquired a site on which to build the tallest tower in Benidorm, but cannot raise sufficient capital to build it. Benito tries to get his new girlfriend, Claudia, to sleep with a banker in order to persuade him to give them the money to build Gonzalez Tower. When this fails, Benito marries the banker's daughter, Marta. Building begins on the tower, and Benito continues to sleep with both women. Rita shows up at the building site, looking for money and a job for Miguel. Benito lords his wealth and success over her, and insists she give him her knickers in exchange for what she wants. Meanwhile, Claudia is getting restless being a mistress and Marta is angry with Benito for cheating on her. He tries to resolve this by suggesting a threesome. Though affronted at first, the two women bond, and all three go to bed together.

After a party one night, Claudia is killed and Benito crippled in a car crash. Marta nurses him back to health, but his libido is destroyed, and his finances are in a mess. Things are going badly with Gonzalez Tower, and Mosca is electrocuted on site, presumably by gangsters involved in the project. Benito tries to reform a *ménage à trois* with Ana, a brassy nightclub dancer, but Marta will have none of it and leaves him. With his tower demolished and his assets frozen, Benito flees for Miami with Ana.

In Miami, Benito's circumstances are immensely reduced. Ana gambles away their money and pays a gardener to have sex with her because Benito suffers from occasional impotence. They try a threesome, but Benito's heart isn't in it. In despair and rage, Benito rips the bidet out of their bathroom floor and sobs over his broken life.

Bigas Luna's last film, *Jamón, Jamón*, puzzled many with its erratic admixture of black comedy, sex farce, and domestic melodrama. The plot was a thick braid of symbolic motifs, such as ham, bulls and underwear, with ruthlessly symmetrical couplings and twists strong enough to strangle any stirrings of warmth one might feel for its garishly iconic characters. *Golden Balls* is perhaps even more intricately wrought, louder and flashier, and yet it seems more engaging and considered than its predecessor. The improvement could possibly be explained by its use of the gangster's-rise-and-fall genre, which suits Luna's predilection for heavy-handed moralism better than the intimate setting of *Jamón, Jamón*. Spanning three countries and apparently about ten years, its sheer scale allows the characters more room to breathe, and permits the leitmotifs to develop more fully - this time eggs, lobsters and bidets, to name but a few. Discrepancies between the version I saw and the synopsis in the press handout suggest that scenes have been cut from a



One man's meat: Javier Bardem

longer version. Yet, packed with plot as tightly as star Javier Bardem's underpants, it seems longer than its 95 minutes, so that with the relentless preoccupation with sex, eating, and machismo one emerges feeling fucked, in every sense of the word.

Indeed, this is precisely how our hero himself feels at the film's conclusion. For some, *Jamón, Jamón* was flawed by its seemingly unproblematic celebration of Hispanic male potency, which made it look perilously close to just another arty skin-flick. *Golden Balls* takes a more sceptical look at the myth of the Latin Lover, and at masculinity in general. Benito's flaw in this tragedy-farce is his tendency to over-conflate sexual and financial success, so that the failure of one becomes the inevitable undoing of the other. Hence the title, which neatly epitomises this conjunction.

Unfortunately, the pun of the Spanish title, *Huevos de oro*, is lost in translation - a shame since it explains Benito's predilection for eggs (*huevos*, the colloquial word for testicles). Similarly lost is the pun on the word for sausage, *chorizo*, which also means 'crook', and is the traditional partner of eggs - both are consumed throughout the film in great quantities. As in *Jamón, Jamón*, food is never merely incidental here, but an essential vehicle of meaning and plot development. Benito's final impoverishment is as much symbolised through his impotence as it is by his new diet of hamburgers and bad American coffee.

At heart, *Golden Balls* is more of a deconstruction than a celebration of machismo and its centrality to Spanish culture. Despite his predilection for skyscrapers and chorizo, Benito is not so much phallocentric as 'testicular-centric', turning his possession of twin

gonads into a principle of acquisition, as he aims to own two of everything - women, houses, dogs, even Rolex watches. The satire, although to some extent universal and thus not terribly original, has a special resonance for contemporary Spanish society, which after all has given the rest of the world the word *cojones* as a term of praise. Along the way, much mockery is made of sacred Spanish icons of vulgarity such as Salvador Dali and Julio Iglesias, whose song "Par el amor de una mujer" crops up repeatedly in *Golden Balls*, describing a man brought to despair by love.

Javier Bardem as Benito is developing into a fine actor with an impressive, taurine presence, after serving his apprenticeship with a string of beef-cake roles in films like Almodóvar's *High Heels*, and Bigas Luna's *The Ages of Lulu* and *Jamón, Jamón*. If he can speak English, he could be the next Antonio Banderas. The women's roles are of necessity less interesting, since it is intrinsic to Benito's character that he think of them as interchangeable, distinguished literally only by how much they weigh. In spite of this, the female members of the cast comport themselves well, especially Maribel Verdu (recently starring in Fernando Trueba's dreary Oscar-winner *Belle Époque*) as the comic-tragic victim Claudia and Maria de Medeiros as the brittle long-suffering wife Marta.

At one amusingly self-reflexive moment in the film, some characters discuss the necessity of getting an American actor in a movie in order to make it more attractive for the overseas market. With its strong cast and witty script, *Golden Balls*, though by no means a masterpiece, needs no such blandishments.

Leslie Felperin Sharman

In weiter Ferne, so nah! (Faraway, So Close)

Germany 1993

Director: Wim Wenders

Certificate
15
Distributor
Columbia TriStar
Production Companies
Road Movies
Tobis Filmkunst
Executive Producer
Ulrich Felsberg
Producer
Wim Wenders
Line Producer
Michael Schwarz
Production Co-ordinator
Claudia Bade
Unit Managers
Karsten Brunig
Ralph Remstedt
Location Manager
Ralph Remstedt
Assistant Directors
Scott Kirby
Caroline Veyssi re
Anton Rey
Casting Co-ordinator
Catherine Coste
Screenplay
Wim Wenders
Ulrich Zieger
Richard Reitingner
Story
Wim Wenders
Story Advisers
Daniel Ganz
Lothar Trolle
Dialogue
Ulrich Zieger
Continuity
Katrin Mehlhop
Director of Photography
J rgen J rges
Steadicam
J rg Widmer
2nd Camera
Judith Kaufmann
Video Supervisor
Dieter Klucke
Optical Effects/
Matte Painting
Frank Schlegel
Morten McAdams
Matte Artists
Hubert Von Seidlein
Christoph Kunzmann
Leigh Took
Computer Animation
"Bibo" Peter Tabbert
Editor
Peter Przygodda
Production Designer
Albrecht Konrad
Set Decorator
Martin Schreiber
Storyboards
Angelika Margull
Special Effects
Ulrich Netzer
Michael Luppino
Costume Design
Esther Walz
Wardrobe
Andrea Schirmer
Marianne Birk
Ingrid Weiss
Make-up
Hasson von Hugo
Christine Atar
Additional:
Valeska Schitthelm
Axl Zornow
Titles/Opticals
Peter Bartoschek
Waltraud Bartoschek
Music
Laurent Petitgand
Music Performed by
Orchester Sherry
Bertram
Solo Cello:
David Darling
Soprano:
Irene Maas

Music Editor
Peter Przygodda
Songs/Music Extracts
"Faraway, So Close!",
"Cassiel's Song" by and
performed by Nick
Cave; "Stay" by and
performed by U2;
"Why Can't I Be Good"
by and performed
by Lou Reed; "Chaos"
by and performed
by Herbert
Gronemeyer;
"Travelling On",
"All God's Children"
by and performed by
Simon Bonney, J.D.
Foster, "The Wanderer"
by U2, performed by
U2 with Johnny Cash;
"Slow Tango" by and
performed by Jane
Siberry; "Call Me"
by Guy Chadwick.
The House of Love,
performed by The
House of Love;
"Tightrope", "Speak
My Language" by
and performed by
Laurie Anderson
Sound Supervisor
G nther Kortwich
Sound Editor
Barbara Von
Weitershausen
Dialogue Editor
Eva Claudius
Music Recordist
Gareth Jones
Sound Effects Recordists
Hans-Walter Kramski
Bernd Schmidt
Dolby stereo
consultant:
Hubert Henle
Supervising Mixer
Michael Kranz
Sound Effects Editor
Evelyn Schmidt
Sound Effects
Matthias Lempert
Stunt Co-ordinator
Fran ois Doge
Armourer
Karl Nefer
Gerd Feuchter
Mini Helicopter Team
Assistant Director:
Eva Maria
Unit Manager:
Olaf Bessenbacher
Helicopter Team
Pilots:
Roland Pribus
Klaus Krey
Anton Klima
Technical Advice:
Martin Gehbauer

Cast
Otto Sander
Cassiel
Peter Falk
Himself
Horst Buchholz
Tony Baker
Nastassja Kinski
Rapha la
Heinz R hmann
Konrad
Bruno Ganz
Daniel
Solveig Dommartin
Marion
Rudiger Vogler
Philip Winter
Lou Reed
Himself

Willem Dafoe
Emit Flesti
Mikhail Gorbachev
Himself
Marijam Agischewa
Kirsten
Henri Alekan
Captain
Tom Farrell
Jack
Monika Hansen
Hanna/Gertrud Becker
Aline Krawieski
Raissa
G nther Meissner
Forger
Ronald Nitschke
Patzke
Camille Pontabry
Doria
Udo Samel
Gerd Wameling
Security Officers
Matthias Zelic
Salesman
Hanns Zischler
Dr Becker
Martin Olbertz
Dying Man
Tilmann Vierzig
Young Konrad
Antonia Westphal
Young Hanna
Ingo Schmitz
Anton Becker
Sascha Wohlatz
Lasse Lehmann
Marcel Jelinski
Nils Schildhauer
Patrick Winz
Benjamin Winz
Teenagers
Fr d ric Darie
Maurice
Jean-Marie Rase
Jules
Lajos Kovacs
Lali
Bruno Krief
Paul
Armanne Brown
Paula

Hugues Delforge
Claude Poncet
Elastonautes
Susanne Jansen
Woman at Gallery
Bob Rutman
Artist
Yella R ttl nder
Winter's Angel
Alexander Hauff
Cab Driver
Johanna Penski
Florist
Steffi Hiller
Eberhard Knappe
Passers-by
Shafiq Namani
Street Gambler
Klaus-J rgen Steinmann
Policeman
Andrzej Pieczynski
Czomsky
Natan Fedorowski
Russian
Louis Cochet
Louis
Daniela Nasincova
Angel
G nther Kelm
Heinz-Peter Graubaum
Museum Security
Guards
Claude Lergenm ller
Andr 
Melanie Pontabry
Melanie
Alfred Szczot
Grumpy
Nadja Engel
Woman Slapping
Cassiel

12, 979 feet
144 minutes

Dolby stereo
Black and white/Colour
Part Subtitled

Cassiel, one of the invisible angels who watch over the people of Berlin, confides to his colleague Rapha la his longing to know what it's like to be human. Meanwhile he moves among the citizens, listening to their thoughts and sympathising with their joys and sorrows. Among those he watches over are Daniel, a former angel turned human who runs a pizza parlour, his trapeze-artist wife Marion and their daughter Doria; Mikhail Gorbachev, visiting Berlin to give a speech; Hanna, a single mother, her daughter Raissa and Konrad, an old man who used to be Hanna's chauffeur; Phillip Winter, a private eye keeping tabs on Hanna, Raissa and Konrad; Winter's employer Tony Baker, a shady German-born American businessman; Patzke, Baker's criminal rival; and the actor Peter Falk, another former angel, who is visiting Berlin for an exhibition of his drawings.

When Raissa, alone in her high-rise flat, falls from the balcony, Cassiel chooses this moment to become human and catches her. He visits Daniel, who joyfully welcomes his fellow ex-angel. Taking the name 'Karl Engel', Cassiel sets out to explore the human world, only to find it full of loneliness and indifference. Getting drunk, he sinks rapidly into petty crime and degradation. His progress is tracked by a mysterious, sinister figure, Emit Flesti, who alone is able to move freely between the human and angel worlds, and is determined to get Cassiel killed.

Cassiel is rescued from destitution by Tony Baker, who takes a liking to him and makes him his right-hand man. When Patzke takes Baker captive, Cassiel rescues him; in gratitude, Baker offers him a percentage of his activities, which include massive arms-dealing. Horrified, Cassiel runs off, only to come upon the dying Winter, shot by Flesti. Konrad comforts Cassiel and explains Baker's history: he is Hanna's brother, taken to America in 1945 by his escaping Nazi father, while Hanna and her mother remained behind in Konrad's care.

Enlisting the help of his friends, including Marion's acrobatic troupe, Cassiel contrives to hijack Baker's arms cache and spirit it away on a barge, taking Hanna and Raissa along too. Patzke, getting wind of the plan, kidnaps Baker and takes over the barge, holding Raissa at gunpoint to ensure everyone's good behaviour. Cassiel, aided by Flesti, snatches Raissa to safety, but Patzke shoots him dead. In the ensuing commotion, Patzke and his thugs are overpowered. Cassiel's friends mourn his death, consoled by knowing that he is once again an angel and reunited with Rapha la.

That hard-hearted minority who found *Wings of Desire*, Wim Wenders' previous excursion into angelology, all too resistible might well feel inclined to steer clear of its sequel, *Faraway, So Close*. The plot, such as it is, is yet more slapdash than last time, and the whimsy content even higher. "Wim, you make me sick to my stomach," the dying Nicholas Ray growled during the making of *Lightning Over Water*. Anyone sitting through the glutinous finale of *Faraway, So Close*, with its starry-eyed reiterations that all you need is love, may be moved to echo Ray's reaction.

What makes it all the more infuriating is that Wenders' command of cinematic technique seems to increase in direct relation to the soggianness of his content. J rgen J rges' swooping, lyrical cinematography is no less heart-stoppingly exhilarating than that of the veteran Henri Alekan (who photographed *Wings*, and shows up this time round in a gruff cameo as the barge captain). In fact J rges' black-

and-white scenes are so exquisitely toned that it feels like a letdown when the film switches into colour. (The convention, as before, is that angels see in monochrome and humans in colour.) Wenders' sense of editing is as acute as ever, and from his players - especially Bruno Ganz and Peter Falk - he draws performances of relaxed, engaging charm. To see so much technical mastery placed at the service of such banality might well make the angels weep.

Wings of Desire had to be shot mostly in what was then West Berlin. Post-Wall, Wenders was able to shoot *Faraway, So Close* in the former East Zone where ruins and bomb damage, long since tidied away in the West, still evoke the trauma of the war years. Placing the action in the liberated area of the city is also apt, since what the film addresses is the sense of bleak disillusion that followed the euphoria of reunification. Cassiel - and Wenders too, it seems - sees the people of Berlin sunk in a sterile materialism: "Human eyes can only take - they no longer give," muses the ex-angel. Even Mikhail Gorbachev, in his acting debut, is wheeled in to reinforce the message, quoting the writer Fyodor Tyutchev: "Some say a country can only be forged in blood and steel. We shall try to forge it with love. Then let's see which lasts longer."

At a time when the quick-fix of market forces is destroying Gorbachev's own homeland, it would be hard to quarrel with Wenders on what's wrong with Berlin - and with the world. The problem comes with the triteness of his proposed solutions. Like Bertolucci, he seems to have swapped political acuity for fuzzy moral uplift, and thrown in his sense of narrative drive. Big terms like Time and Memory are tossed around ("Zeit ist Kunst" - time is art - reads one wall poster) but rarely pinned down. In *Wings of Desire*, Peter Handke contributed a toughness to the script that ballasted the film's windy abstractions. Lacking Handke's collaboration, the sequel abandons any pretence at narrative coherence, let alone structure.

Plausibility, of course, is beside the point in a fantasy, but internal consistency isn't too much to ask. The first half of the film, in which Otto Sander



Being human: Sander, Dafoe, Dommartin...



...Nastassja Kinski

ambles round peering benignly at everybody, is amiable enough – although anyone who hasn't seen the earlier film, and doesn't know that Daniel also used to be an angel, may have trouble working out what's going on. But after Cassiel opts for full-colour humanity, we are pitchforked into a garbled pastiche of a gangster thriller, tricked out with occasional dollops of Nazi war-guilt; its bland disregard for motivation suggests that Wenders made the whole thing up as he went along. This is a depressingly long way from the taut, ironic reworking of noir conventions he gave us in *The American Friend*.

The most ill-conceived element is Willem Dafoe's character, archly named Emit Flesti (try spelling it backwards). Dafoe brings far more style than it warrants to the role of this cut-rate Mephistopheles, who has apparently engineered the whole affair in order to end Cassiel's human life. Yet at one point he simply produces a cross-bow and kills off a minor character. Why he couldn't do the same with Cassiel – and why, come to that, he is so determined to see off Cassiel while quite unbothered by Daniel's human state – is anybody's guess.

Yet if *Faraway, So Close* is frequently irritating, it's rarely boring. And it has moments of delight: the troupe of acrobats, turning bungy-jumping into an aerial ballet; Bruno Ganz bowling along on his pizza trike belting out "Funiculi Funicula" in outlandish Italian; Dafoe, warned his malicious behaviour will pall in the long run, snapping back, "I am the long run." There's also some neat comedy of confusion with Falk trying to gain entry to a guarded building, causing puzzled debate about the guards over why *Columbo* is showing on their entry-phone circuit. But in the end *Faraway, So Close* founders under the weight of its own self-indulgence. Let's hope some kind angel will protect us from a further sequel in which Nastassja Kinski goes human.

Philip Kemp

Intersection

USA 1994

Director: Mark Rydell

Certificate

15

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Paramount Pictures

Executive Producer

Frederic Golchan

Producers

Bud Yorkin

Mark Rydell

Co-producer

Ray Hartwick

Associate Producer

Alan B. Curtiss

Production Co-ordinator

Alice Ferrier

Rhonda Legge

Unit Production Manager

Grace Gilroy

Location Manager

Christine Haebler

2nd Unit:

Mark Gamache

Post-production

Supervisor

Christopher Wilkinson

2nd Unit Director

Christopher Wilkinson

Assistant Directors

Alan B. Curtiss

Rachel Leiterman

Sheila Carpenter

2nd Unit:

Mick MacKay

Sandy McGiffert

Casting

Lyn Stalmaster

Canada:

Stuart Aikins

Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

David Rayfiel

Marshall Brickman

Based on the novel *Les*

Choses de la Vie by Paul

Guimard and the

screenplay by Paul

Guimard, Jean-Loup

Dabadie, Claude Sautet

Script Supervisor

Christine Wilson

Director of Photography

Vilmos Zsigmond

2nd Unit Director

of Photography

Laszlo George

Underwater Photography

Pauline Heaton

Camera Operators

Ray de la Motte

2nd Unit:

Attila Szalay

Ross Kelsay

Editor

Mark Warner

Production Designer

Harold Michelson

Art Director

Yvonne Hurst

Set Design

Marco Rubeo

Set Decorator

Dominique Fauquet-

Lemaître

Illustrator

Lance King

Scenic Artists

Kevin Dubois

Gillian Richards

Barry Kootchin

Storyboard Artist

Fred Lucky

Computer Graphics

David Cowan

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Michael Vezina

Special Effects

Foreperson:

Nick Lawson

Fabricators:

Terry Sonderhoff

Gordon Davis

Costume Design

Ellen Mirojnick

Wardrobe

Department Head:

Diane Widas

Los Angeles Supervisor:

Deborah Hopper

Canada:

Diana Patterson

Make-up

Jan Newman

Tom Lucas

Tricia Sawyer

Hair Design

Paul LeBlanc

Hair Stylists

Kathrine Sidick

James Brown

Title Design

Phill Norman

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title,

Music

James Newton Howard

Music Director

Marty Paich

Music Extracts

"Sonata in G Minor –

First Movement" by

Johan Sebastian Bach,

performed by Irena

Grafenauer, Maria

Graf, David Geringas

Music Performed by

Harmonica:

Toots Thielemans

Orchestrations

Brad Dechter

James Newton Howard

Music Editor

Jim Weidman

Music Score Co-ordinator

Michael Mason

Supervising Sound Editor

Kay Rose

Sound Editors

Gordon Davidson

Richard Oswald

David Spence

Virginia Cook-

McGowan

Gary S. Gerlich

Greg Gerlich

Patrick Bietz

ADR Editor

Beth Bergeron

Foley Editors

David Horton

Valerie Davidson

Scot Tinsley

Sound Mixers/

Sound Recordists

Eric Batut

2nd Unit:

Larry Sutton

Music:

Shawn Murphy

Consultant:

Thom Ehle

Sound Re-recordists

Gary Bourgeois

Brad Sherman

Foley Artists

Ken Dufva

David Lee Fein

Stunt Co-ordinators

Mic Rodgers

Brent Woolsey

Cast

Richard Gere

Vincent Eastman

Sharon Stone

Sally Eastman

Lolita Davidovich

Olivia Marshak

Martin Landau

Neal

David Selby

Richard Quarry

Jenny Morrison

Meaghan Eastman

Ron White

Charlie

Matthew Walker

Surgeon

Scott Bellis

Van Driver

Patricia Harris

Van Driver's Wife

Keegan Macintosh

Van Driver's Son

Alan C. Peterson

Semi-Driver

Sandra P. Grant

Receptionist

Robyn Stevan

Dave Hurtubise

Gary Jones

Gerry McAteer

Christine Lipa

Denalda Williams

Eli Gabay

Akiko Morison

Step Magazine

Barney McFadden

Kevin McNulty

Developers

Jay Brazeau

Businessman

Betty Phillips

Edwina

Mikal Dughi

Mrs Krask

Paul McLean

Pappas

Mark Roberts

John Graham

Marlene Worrall

Kirsten Graham

Ted Deeken

Auctioneer

Bill Finck

Man at Auction

Carol Whiteman

Auction Cashier

Stacy Grant

Hostess

Andrew Guy

Bartender

Suki Kaiser

Diner Waitress

Tom Heaton

Grandfather

Christine Hendra

Little Girl

Timothy Webber

Truck Driver

Christopher J. Tuck

Passenger in Pickup

Truck

Garry Chalk

Paramedic

Veena Sood

Intern

Tim Battle

Draftsman

Nancy Cawsey

Katherine McLaren

Trauma Nurses

Dr D'Arcy Lawrence

Radiologist

Ron Chartier

Resident

Dr Denise Beaudry

Anesthesiologist

Jon Cuthbert

Cop

Susan Astley

Woman in Waiting

Room

Loretta Bailey

Nurse in Waiting Room

Margaret Nelson

Nurse at Desk

8,895 feet

99 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

DeLuxe

America, somewhere on the open road. A car spins out of control. As it crashes, we flash back a few weeks in the life of its driver. Vincent Eastman, a successful architect, has recently separated from his wife Sally and started an affair with young journalist Olivia Marshak. However, he can't make up his mind whether or not he wants a divorce. He is still drawn to Sally, who has played a crucial, administrative part in furthering his career, and he doesn't want to lose contact with his 14-year-old ballet dancer daughter Meaghan.

Matters come to a head on the evening the trustees of one of his new buildings, a museum of American Indian culture, throw a reception in his honour. Olivia turns up, drunk and uninited. He is furious with her and only reluctantly introduces her to his wife. Rather than go home with her, he drives off into the night to think about his future. Eventually, he writes her a letter, telling her their affair is over. As dawn breaks, he stops off at a store to mail the letter. A chance encounter with a little girl and her grandfather makes him reconsider his decision. He decides he does love Olivia after all, leaves a message on her answering machine telling her he wants to marry her, and then drives at high speed to get back to her.

En route, he crashes. He is rushed to the local hospital, but dies shortly afterwards from his injuries. Sally is presented with his personal effects, which include the unposted letter. She reads this. Believing her husband was on the verge of returning to her, and not wishing to hurt Olivia's feelings, she rips it up. Olivia, for her part, makes no mention of Vincent's last call to her.

An architect is really just a cowboy with cultural capital. This, at least, was an idea King Vidor seemed to endorse when he cast Gary Cooper as the lead in his absurdly overblown version of the absurdly overblown Ayn Rand novel, *The Fountainhead*, which celebrated the lawless, freewheeling

Kika

Spain 1993

Director: Pedro Almodóvar

Certificate
18
Distributor
Electric Pictures
Production Company
El Deseo, S.A. and Ciby 2000
Executive Producer
Agustín Almodóvar
Line Producer
Esther García
Production Manager
Alejandro Vázquez
Assistant Directors
Raúl de la Morena
Sergio Francisco
Screenplay
Pedro Almodóvar
Continuity
Marisa Ibarra
Director of Photography
Alfredo Mayo
Steadicam Operator
Joaquín de Santiago
Editor
José Salcedo
Set Design
Javier Fernandez
Alain Bainée
Special Effects
Yves Domenjoud
Olivier Gleyze
Jean-Baptiste Bonetto
Costume Design
Jean-Paul Gaultier
José María Cossio with the collaboration of Gianni Versace
Make-up
Gregorio Ros
Hairstylist
Jesús Moncusi
Title Design
Studio Gatti
Titles/Opticals
Carlos Santos
Songs/Musical Extracts
"Danza Española N.º 5" by Enrique Granados
Campiña, performed by London Symphony Orchestra; "Se Nos Rompió el Amor" performed by Fernanda Y Bernarda; "Concierto Para Bongo", performed by De Maso Pérez
Prado; "Glaglione" performed by Hisaig Panchuilli; "Mamá Yo Quiero" by Jaraca y Vincente Pauja, performed by Pérez
Cast
Verónica Forqué
Kika
Peter Coyote
Nicholas
Victoria Abril
Andrea Caracortada (Scarface)
Alex Casanovas
Ramón
Rossy de Palma
Juana
Santiago Lajusticia
Pablo
Anabel Alonso
Amparo
Bibi Andersen
Susana
Jesús Bonilla
Karra Elejalde
Police
Manuel Bandera
Chico Carretera
Charo López
Rafaela
Francisca Caballero
Dona Paqueta
Mónica Bardem
Paca
Joaquín Climent
Killer
Blanca Li
Murdered Woman
Claudia Aros
Model
10,250 feet
114 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour
Subtitles

Kika is an ever-optimistic beautiful living with Ramón, an introspective and uncommunicative underwear photographer she met when summoned to make up his cataleptic 'corpse'. Returning from abroad, Ramón's stepfather, American novelist Nicholas Pearce, moves into the flat above. Ramón and Nicholas jointly own a country house ('Youkali') bequeathed them by Ramón's mother, with whom Ramón has been obsessed since her suicide. Unsatisfied by her relationship with Ramón, Kika secretly enjoys occasional sex with the mysterious and seductive Nicholas.

Ramón also has his secrets: before Kika, he had been involved with Andrea Caracortada (Scarface), an ex-psychologist turned crime reporter. Their relationship ended dramatically, leaving Andrea with a sizeable grudge and a scar on her face. Equipped with a motorbike and customised black rub-

ber suit, Andrea specialises in on-the-spot crime reports and sensationalist interviews with victims and perpetrators for her TV 'reality show' *The Worst of the Day*.

Andrea encounters Kika when pursuing mentally-deficient convicted rapist Pablo, who escaped while on parole from prison to attend a religious festival in his home village. Unknown to Kika, her maid Juana is Pablo's sister and Kika's flat is his first port of call on the run. Juana, a plain-speaking lesbian who is in love with Kika, does her best to protect her sleeping mistress from Pablo's voracious sexual appetite by promising to satisfy his needs herself. She decides to send Pablo into hiding and tells him to steal some of Ramón's cameras, concealing her role in the theft by getting Pablo to slug her and tie her to a chair. While Juana is bound and unconscious, Pablo repeatedly rapes Kika until the police arrive and pull him away. He escapes as Andrea arrives on the scene. Kika angrily refuses to answer Andrea's intrusive questions and tries to put the incident behind her, only to be further humiliated by the TV screening of a video recording of the rape sent in by a neighbouring voyeur. Discovering that Ramón is the source of the video, she moves out.

Andrea's continuing scrutiny of Ramón's video and Nicholas' latest manuscript lead her to suspect Nicholas of multiple murder and, desperate for the scoop, she pursues him to Youkali, where Ramón has already discovered a dead body and confronted him with the evidence of his mother's murder. While Ramón lies in another cataleptic swoon, Andrea forces her way in and dies in a struggle with Nicholas. Kika, drawn by a letter from Ramón, turns up in time to hear Nicholas' dying confession and revive Ramón. Following the ambulance taking him to hospital, however, she picks up a hitcher, with whom she drives off into the sunset.

Following the relatively disappointing *High Heels* (1991), this latest offering from Spain's iconoclastic enfant terrible clearly attempts to reprise the more provocative tone of Almodóvar's stylishly outrageous work of the mid-80s. Such characteristically challenging films as *What Have I Done To Deserve This?* (1984), *Matador* (1986) and *Law of Desire* (1987) rode exquisitely roughshod over traditionally divisive notions of high and low with their defiant subversions of rigid social structures and gender binaries. But, although *Kika* reassembles the familiar ingredients of these explosive generic cocktails of dark melodrama, wacky comedy and colourful visual flamboyance, the film is marred by two major irritants: a poorly crafted and fragmented plot which abandons characters and narrative threads mid-stream, and a recurrently nagging feeling that we have been here before.

In a self-conscious pastiche of its classic precursors, voyeurism and obsession dominate the film, serving up a

veritable voyeur's gallery of referential camerawork, dialogue, clips and posters which recall *The Prowler*, *Rear Window* and, most persistently, *Peeping Tom*. Substituting Michael Powell's psychopathic protagonist with a parade of obsessives, Almodóvar focuses on the postmodern world of the surface, creating a world of urban violence and media exploitation in which his characters experience life through a series of personal fictions and obsessions. For the introspective, oedipally stunted Ramón, pleasure is only possible through the camera lens that mediates both his private and professional pursuits, including his sexual relationship with Kika; fiction and reality merge for Nicholas, whose darkly 'mysterious' activities are recorded by the alter ego protagonists of his novels; half-witted rapist Pablo regards his porn-star credentials as a licence for sexual abuse; and Kika's naive faith in the transformative power of cosmetic artistry celebrates the enhancing effects of eye make-up on intelligence ("Long live eyelashes!") and revitalises corpses – quite literally in the case of the cataleptic Ramón.

Some of Almodóvar's most memorable parodies revolve around merciless send-ups of the media, and in *Kika*, where sensation and sensationalism are all grist to the media mill, this preoccupation moves centre-stage. Sponsored by La Real Milk (a linguistic play on the sexual connotations and associations with violence and absurdity of the Spanish word for milk, 'leche', meaning both 'a blow' and 'the absolute limit'), Andrea's TV 'reality show' epitomises the worst excesses of media exploitation with grotesquely intrusive interviews and her obsessive pursuit of the ultimate exclusive: a head-to-head with a serial killer. The raw-edged effect of their presentation through the video medium lends a more caustic edge to these parodies of victim harassment, and to Almodóvar's customary critique of Catholic ritual in the more sinister, Buñuelian tone of Andrea's graphic recordings of the 'Los Picaos' festival of flagellation and self-mortification.

Always sailing close to the wind of controversy, *Kika* has provoked from the Spanish press the most vitriolic accusations of rampant commercialism, media hype, exploitation of homosexuality and gratuitously sensationalist misogyny. Whether or not this is deserved, it is certainly not entirely surprising. There seems little narrative justification, for example, for the much-publicised first on-screen full-frontal nude shot of transsexual Bibi Andersen, and the lengthy protraction of Kika's rape scene suggests less a distancing effect than a reluctance to recognise when enough is enough. Kika's indignant distress at the television broadcast of her videoed violation ("I'm not prepared to have my rape used to sell milk") invites a presumably unintentional – or perhaps perversely deliberate – ironic reflection on Almodóvar's own treatment of the subject. As a shock tactic, the impact of the device

is weakened by its obvious reworking of the post-rape interrogation of Eva in *Matador* and the exhibitionist 'trick' in *What Have I Done To Deserve This?*

Almodóvar's famed centrality of strong female roles is one of *Kika*'s strengths. Kika's maid Juana (enhanced by the striking features of Rossy de Palma) offers one of the most originally-crafted characters of the film – the love-struck lesbian who fiercely defends her right to sport a moustache, which is "not a solely male prerogative" – though she regrettably becomes a casualty of the abrupt plot swerve halfway through the film. Victoria Abril displays her customary versatility as the predatory Andrea, introducing a futuristic element hitherto unseen in Almodóvar with her much-commented on costume – a Jean-Paul Gaultier creation featuring camcorder headgear and breastplate spotlights. In her role as dizzily pragmatic Kika ('Our Lady of Optimism', as the director has dubbed her), Verónica Forqué also offers an impressive performance, but her style, whilst highly amusing, is shot through with *déjà vu* from *What Have I Done To Deserve This?*, and her work with other comic directors.

Although some of the set pieces display Almodóvar's capacity for originality – such as Kika's second revival of the 'dead' Ramón by plugging his big toe into a light socket and the characteristic 'bad taste' of Pablo's lascivious orange-sucking gag – unfortunately many of the comic strategies are over-familiar. Perhaps significantly, even Almodóvar's elderly mother is wheeled out yet again in the previously-exploited gag of the monotone TV presenter (*Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*), this time as a chat-show host, to deliver the film's most glaringly auteurist conceit: "My son is directing this programme." Some of the dialogues distractingly echo earlier films and the opening credits themselves – spotlight, keyhole, scantily-clad mannequin cut-outs – betray their origins: *Law of Desire* and *Pepi, Luci, Bom and Other Girls on the Heap* (1980). The film's main strength lies in its visual exuberance (even more glossily extravagant than usual, thanks to a relatively big budget by Spanish standards), but here many of the effects are more striking for their recall of previous films than for their own inventiveness.

Almodóvar's highly referential register seems to have come full circle, feeding cannibalistically off his earlier work and devouring much of its originality in the process. If the list of guests at Kika's Gran Vía opening night knees-up provides a measure of Spanish institutionalisation of the 'Almodóvar phenomenon' – a concept ironically at odds with the director's declared anti-establishment position – one is tempted to wonder whether Almodóvar has not become a victim of his own notoriety, losing the sharpness of his critical edge and recycling of his own style and ideas into a disappointing imitation of its former self.

Rikki Morgan

Luck, Trust & Ketchup: Robert Altman in Carver Country

USA 1994

Directors: Mike Kaplan, John Dorr

Certificate

15
Distributor
 Mainline Pictures
Production Companies
 EZTV/Circle Associates production
Producers
 John Dorr
 Mike Kaplan
Associate Producer
 Michael Masucci
Camera
 John Dorr
Editor
 Michael Masucci
Songs
 "To Hell With Love",
 "Prisoner of Life"
 by Doc Pomus, Mac
 Rebennack, "I'm
 Gonna Go Fishin'"
 by Duke Ellington,
 Peggy Lee, performed
 by Annie Ross and The
 Low Note Quintet
Digital On-line Editors
 Kenny Fields
 Steve Fuiten
 Tom Reichlan

Film Extracts

Short Cuts (1993)
 The Player (1992)

Mike Kaplan

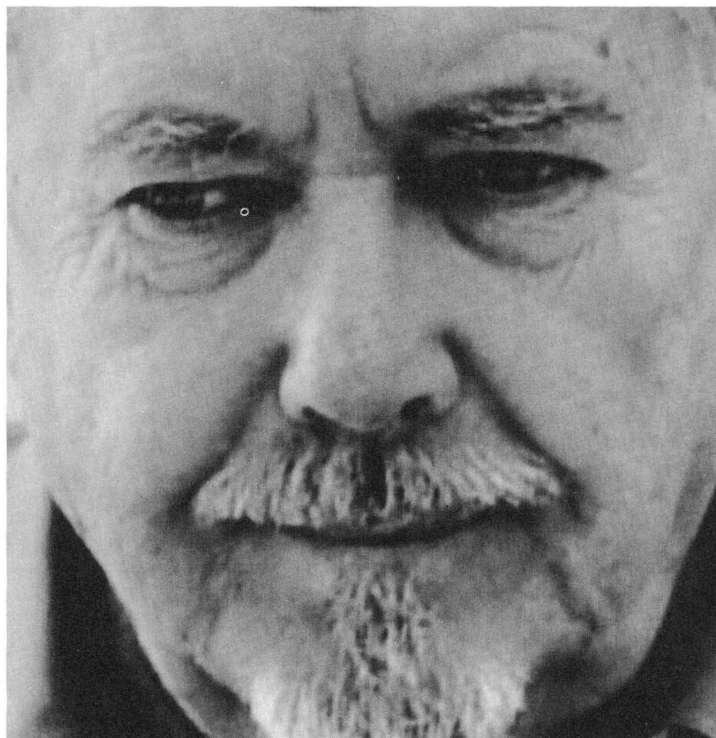
Interviewer
Robert Altman
 Tess Gallagher
 Anne Archer
 Bruce Davison
 Robert Downey Jr.
 Peter Gallagher
 Buck Henry
 Jennifer Jason Leigh
 Jack Lemmon
 Huey Lewis
 Lyle Lovett
 Andie MacDowell
 Frances McDormand
 Matthew Modine
 Julianne Moore
 Christopher Penn
 Tim Robbins
 Annie Ross
 Lori Singer
 Madeleine Stowe
 Lily Taylor
 Lily Tomlin
 Tom Waits
 Fred Ward
Stephen Altman
 Don Bachardy
 Frank Barhydt
 Luca Koumelis
 Walt Lloyd
 Allan Nicholls
 Geraldine Peroni
 Hal Willner
 Interviewees

3,237 feet
 90 minutes

In colour
 16mm

A record of the making of Robert Altman's film *Short Cuts*, comprising interviews with Altman himself, all 22 main actors in his cast, various technicians on the project and Tess Gallagher, the widow and literary executor of Raymond Carver, on whose short stories *Short Cuts* is based. The documentary takes a broadly chronological approach: it opens with Altman explaining how he first became inspired by Carver's stories to make the picture and ends as he says goodbye to the crew after the final wrap. Interspersed with the interviews are sequences showing Altman and his team at work, both in the studio and on location, and occasional clips of the finished movie. There is also 'home movie' film of Carver; footage of the artist Don Bachardy painting the various cast members; of the actors and crew turning up at a small theatre to watch the dailies; and of Gallagher presenting Altman with one of her husband's shirts.

As a documentary in its own right, *Luck, Trust & Ketchup* doesn't exactly reach out and grab you. Shot on a camcorder and consisting mainly of interviews with actors and technicians, it is static, wordy and hampered



Man of the moment: Robert Altman

by cumbersome framing and sometimes patchy sound quality. It is a determinedly modest little picture, discreetly recording the shooting of a much bigger film, but this, perversely, is its strength: it sets out to observe, and its very simplicity ends up complementing the subject matter perfectly.

These days, almost every big-budget Hollywood movie comes with a 'making of' documentary attached. They tend to be glossy affairs, detailing how hair-raising stunts were achieved and taking viewers through the special effects and costume departments. For most of them, demystifying the whole film-making process is not part of any Brechtian project to lay bare the device, but is just another angle to the marketing strategy. Like Altman's pictures themselves, however, *Luck, Trust & Ketchup* exists at an ironic remove from the mainstream. Its timing (the film has not been rushed out to whet our appetites for *Short Cuts*, but follows at a respectful distance behind it) and its self-consciously amateurish production values suggest its aims are very different from those of the typical 'making of' doc.

What film-makers Mike Kaplan and John Dorr really wanted to do was to show Altman's working process. In this, they are only partially successful, but they, and their many interviewees, at least manage to hint at what seems to be a contradictory aesthetic. Altman is the master of contrived improvisation. As Chris Penn puts it, "He's very spontaneous and he knows exactly what he wants" – a sentiment echoed again and again. We are told he welcomes contributions from anybody, whether a leading actor or a key grip. Jennifer Jason Leigh was allowed to write an entire scene. Tim Robbins came up with the idea of having a clown in the movie. Jack Lemmon got to perform his favourite party trick with an egg. Lori

Singer's cello solo just happened to fit the mood of a certain sequence perfectly, and almost everybody else in the vicinity of the camera made some original creative contribution or other. But we also hear from scriptwriter Frank Barhydt how he and Altman rigorously plotted the path the movie would take with coloured stickers. Altman may seem as if he makes films on the hoof, but the "luck" the title refers to (what Robert Downey Jr. describes as Altman's "ability to seize the moment") is never as important a factor as he would have us believe.

It is hardly news that actors adore Altman and "come out of the woodwork" to be in one of his pictures. They trust him and like the way he tends to shoot in master shots, which allows them to get their teeth into a scene. He in turn respects them, and always pays them the courtesy of inviting them to see their work in the dailies. Still, for all the superb performances he coaxes from his casts, his films are remembered because he directed them, not because of their stars. His amiable approach, his willingness to talk to anyone (in particular, Kaplan and Dorr) and the sheer relish he takes in the collaborative aspects of film-making are not traits commonly associated with the 'great directors', who are generally lauded as heroic individuals. Altman may eschew that kind of fawning praise, but it tends to come his way all the same. There's a touching, slightly embarrassing scene toward the end of *Luck, Trust & Ketchup* where the camcorder catches Tess Gallagher presenting him with one of Raymond Carver's old, ink-stained shirts. "Essentially two geniuses coming together" is how she has already characterised his journey into Carver country. It's an attitude quite palpably shared by cast, crew and documentary makers alike.

Geoffrey Macnab

Neil Simon's Lost in Yonkers

USA 1993

Director: Martha Coolidge

Certificate

PG
Distributor
 Columbia TriStar
Production Company
 A Rastar Production
 for Columbia Pictures Industries
Executive Producer
 Joseph M. Caracciolo
Producer
 Ray Stark
Co-producer
 Emanuel Azenberg
Production Co-ordinator
 Wendi Haas
Unit Production Manager
 Joseph M. Caracciolo
Location Manager
 Alan Forbes
Assistant Directors
 Randall Badger
 Timothy Lonsdale
 Otie Brown

Casting
 Jennifer Shull

Screenplay
 Neil Simon
 Based on his play

Script Supervisor
 Suzie Sax-Horowitz

Director of Photography
 Johnny E. Jensen

Camera Operator
 Mark Van Loon

Editor
 Steven Cohen

Production Designer
 David Chapman

Art Director
 Mark Haack

Art Department Co-ordinator
 Aryn Chapman

Set Design
 Thomas H. Paul

Set Decorator
 Marvin March

Production Illustrator
 Maurice Zuberano

Special Effects
 Daniel Ottesen

Costume Design
 Shelley Komarov

Wardrobe
 Robert Ianneccone

Make-up
 Dan Striepeke

Hairstylists
 Susan Germaine

Production Designer
 Susan Kalinowski

Director of Photography
 Pittard Sullivan

Opticals
 Cinema Research Corporation

Music

Elmer Bernstein
Music Editor
 Kathy Durning
Songs/Music Extracts
 "Now Voyager"
 by Max Steiner
Supervising Sound Editors
 Tom C. McCarthy
 Roxanne Jones
Sound Editors
 Christopher Aud
 Mark L. Mangino
 Sanford Ponder
Supervising ADR Editor
 David B. Cohn
Production Mixer
 Lee Orloff
Re-recording Mixers
 Chris Carpenter
 Carlos DeLarios
 Aaron Rochin
Film Extracts
 Now Voyager (1942)

Cast

Richard Dreyfuss
 Louie
 Mercedes Ruehl
 Bella
 Irene Worth
 Grandma
 Brad Stoll
 Jay
 Mike Damus
 Arty
 David Strathairn
 Johnny
 Robert Guy Miranda
 Hollywood Harry
 Jack Lauffer
 Eddie
 Susan Merson
 Gert
 Illya Haase
 Harry's Crony
 Calvin Stillwell
 Gas Station Attendant
 Dick Hagerman
 Truck Driver
 Jesse Vincent
 Danny
 Howard Newstate
 Kid in Store
 Peter Gannon
 Cop
 Lori Schubeler
 Teresa
 Jean Zarzour
 Flo
 Mary Scott Gudaitis
 Celeste

10,253 feet
 114 minutes

Dolby stereo
 In colour

New York, summer of 1942. Fifteen-year-old Jay and his younger brother Artie are taken by their father Eddie to visit their grandmother, who owns a candy store in Yonkers. Grandma, who lives with her simple-minded daughter Bella, is not pleased that Eddie, forced by circumstances to take a travelling job in the south, is proposing to leave the boys with her. But Bella, in an unusual show of spirit, overrules her objections.

The boys settle into their new life, performing a variety of chores for their severe, eagle-eyed Grandma, acting as semi-willing confidants to ►

◀ the exuberant Bella – who has begun a tentative romance with John, a mentally handicapped usher at the local movie theatre – and spending their free time searching for Grandma's legendary stash of cash.

One night, creeping down to the store, they stumble upon Grandma's son, Uncle Louie, a two-bit gangster on the run from a petty hood named Hollywood Harry. The boys are enchanted by Louie's tough-guy bravado, and he, in turn, shows them a secret passage out of the basement and teaches them poker. Though he clashes frequently with his mother, he explains to the boys how the hardships she endured in the past made her so tough.

But Hollywood Harry and his sidekick are staking out the house, and Louie has to give them the slip. This he does successfully, but not before Bella makes him attend a family showdown, where she announces her intention to marry John and open a restaurant. To Bella's dismay, Grandma refuses to give her approval, and neither Louie nor her sister Gert back her up. Determined to marry anyway, Bella runs away but John is too scared to leave his parents. She returns to confront her mother, who admits to shutting down emotionally after the death of her first two children.

After a first few months, Eddie, having saved enough money to pay off his debts, comes back to collect the kids. Though Jay and Arty have learned to respect, if not like, their grandmother, they are sorry to leave Bella, who is becoming more independent. Later, they learn that Bella has left home and started a new life in Florida.

● *Lost in Yonkers* is Neil Simon in gently nostalgic *Brighton Beach Memoirs* mode, and as such is exactly what you'd expect: a bitter-sweet home movie drizzled with wisecracks and wry observations, flawlessly acted and utterly predictable. This is the fourth or fifth time Simon has revisited his childhood, and his generic 15-year-old protagonist is beginning to seem mighty familiar – though Jay here is not an aspiring writer, just an ordinary, reasonably sane Jewish kid in a world of wacky adults.

Thirty years ago, Simon used to write bitingly funny farces such as *The Odd Couple*; these days he seems to have retreated into a haze of comfortable memories, where all characters are colourful and no-one is truly bad, just misunderstood. There is something to be said for such a decent, humane movie-view, and many people respond to it: as a Broadway play, *Lost in Yonkers* won a Pulitzer Prize. But it is so relentlessly even-handed, it's exhausting.

The film starts out promising a villain of epic proportions in Grandma Kurnitz, and even uses the hokey device of keeping her off-screen until her fearsome reputation is established. Eddie, nervous and sweating, dreads asking her to keep his sons, and he frets and fusses at the boys until they get jumpy too. By the time they reach the candy store they are too scared to

touch anything, even to eat the hot fudge sundaes that Bella eagerly whips up for them. But when Grandma finally appears, she is not a monster – just a tough, capable woman with a German accent. She won't make allowances for other people's weakness because she won't admit her own, and she mocks Eddie precisely because he's not like her. Irene Worth makes you feel that she's earned that right, and even gives her a sly sense of humour to flaunt it with. Her actual selfishness and cruelty towards Bella, therefore does not seem as awful as it should. And without someone to loathe, the picture just burbles along – like Jay and Arty's ten-month visit, it's no more than a diversion.

Once the boys and Grandma settle into a live-and-let-live routine, the crux of the film shifts to Bella's struggle for independence. Simon is nothing if not professional, and he makes Bella's hopeful marriage announcement poignant enough. His grip only slips when Bella tells her mother that massaging her legs all these years has been like touching "cold, unfeeling marble", and you wonder whether the words belong to Bella or to the old playwright. But this is hardly fresh material, and Bella's loving nature and mental limitations – she's a teenage girl in a woman's body – add a dangerous extra layer of pathos. Fortunately, Mercedes Ruehl gives the character a jaunty optimism that prevents her from becoming cloying – she strides down the street in flimsy, figure-hugging dresses and ankle socks as if she's expecting something good to be right around the corner. Still, there is something a little ingratiating about the scenes between Bella and Johnny; you can't quite shake the feeling that the film-makers are trying to sell you a view of the mentally handicapped as somehow unspoiled, innately more honest and open-hearted than corrupt, self-serving normal people.

Just as things are getting irredeemably cosy, the arrival of Uncle Louis gives the film a lift. Louie's the kind of fast-talking show-off the picture needs, and Richard Dreyfuss, his foxy little eyes gleaming with mischief, barrels onto the scene as if he were the only performance that mattered. But then he leaves without having contributed substantially to the story, and you wonder whether he was meant as anything other than mid-movie entertainment.

In fact, none of the elements of the story seem to amount to much. Martha Coolidge, whose previous film was the well-received *Rambling Rose*, is fast becoming known as an 'actors' director', which means that she imposes no particular style on the proceedings. She does a sober, unobtrusive job that's also a little dull – she gives the actors their head and respects Simon's prose. You laugh a little, you cry a little, you admire the skill with which everything is put together. There is no doubt that *Lost in Yonkers* is a quality product. But then, so is a good piece of luggage.

Caren Myers

Reality Bites

USA 1994

Director: Ben Stiller

Certificate

12

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Jersey Films

Executive Producers

Stacey Sher

Wm. Barclay Malcolm

Producers

Danny DeVito

Michael Shambberg

Video Sequence Producer

James Jones

Supervising Producers

William Finnegan

Sheldon Pinchuk

Associate Producer

Lori-Etta Taub

Production Associate

Maureen Jennings

Production Co-ordinator

Valerie Peterson-Beale

Unit Production Manager

William Finnegan

Location Managers

Peter M. Roberts

Curtis Collins

Houston:

Ellen L. Warren

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Lorisa Francis-Marrero

Assistant Directors

Allan Wertheimer

Keri L. McIntyre

David Larson

Casting

Francine Maisler

Associates:

Kathleen Driscoll

Kathryn Eisenstein

ADR Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Helen Childress

Script Supervisor

Steve R. Gehrke

Director of Photography

Emmanuel Lubezki

Camera Operator

Rodrigo Garcia

Steadicam Operators

Kyle C. Rudolph

Richard P. Tiedeman

Federick R. Raphael

'Reality Bites' Sequence

Animation

Stephen Kirklys

Video Graphic Design

Jeff Wunderlich

Optical Line Up

Clayton R. Marsh

Editor

Lisa Churgin

Film Editor

John Spence

Production Designer

Sharon Seymour

Art Director

Jeff Knipp

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Amy K. Skjonsby

Set Design

Michael Armani

Set Decorator

Maggie Martin

Set Dressers

Maika Both

James Malley

On Set:

Eric McHugh

Storyboard Artist

John Coven

Special Effects

John Frazier Special Effects:

Arnie Peterson

David Amborn

Costume Design

Eugenie Bafaloukos

Wardrobe Supervisors

Lori Eskowitz

Linda S. Cormany

Make-up Artists

Deborah Larsen

Key:

Marja Webster

Hairstylists

Claude Diaz

Key:

Marja Webster

Houston:

Donna Spahn

Hair Design

Peter Savic

Title Design

Susan Bradley

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

Karl Wallinger

Additional Incidental Music

Greg O'Connor

Music Arrangements/

Orchestrations

Karl Wallinger

Music Co-ordinators

Mary Ramos

Jennifer Pyken

Songs/Music Extracts

"When You Come Back

To Me" by Karl Wal-

linger, performed by

World Party; "Rock 'n

Roll Part II" by Gary

Glitter, Mike Leander,

performed by Gary

Glitter; "Conjunction

Junction" by Robert

Dorough, performed

by Ethan Hawke,

Winona Ryder, Janeane

Garofalo, Steve Zahn;

"Locked Out" by Neil

Finn, "Something So

Strong" by Mitchell

Froom, Neil Finn,

performed by Crowded

House; "Tempted" by

Chris Difford, Glenn

Tilbrook, performed

by Squeeze; "Murder"

by Travis Lane,

performed by KMC;

"Marriage" by Gregory

Corso, performed by

Ethan Hawke; "Turnip

Farm" by J. Mascis,

Kurt Fedora, performed

by Dinosaur Jnr; "My

Sharon" by Doug

Fieger, Berton Averre,

performed by The

Knack; "Baby, I Love

Your Way" by and

performed by Peter

Frampton; "Spin The

Bottle" by Juliana

Hatfield, performed

by The Juliana Hatfield

3; "Disco Inferno" by

Leroy Green, Tyrone G.

Kersey, performed by

The Trammps;

"Morenaza" by and

performed by Maldita

Vecindad Y Los Hijos

Del Quinto Patio;

"Confusion" by

Stephen Morris, Peter

Hook, Bernard Sumner,

Gillian Gilbert, Arthur

Baker, performed by

New Order; "Give A

Man A Fish" by Dick

Rudolph, Minnie

Riperton, Timothy

Barnwell, Todd

Thomas, contains

samples from "Sing a

Simple Song" by

Sylvester Stewart,

performed by Arrested

Development; "Arise"

by Max Cavalera,

Andreas Kisser, Igor

Cavalera, Paulo Jnr,

performed by

Sepultura; "Spinning

Around Over You" by

Lenny Kravitz, Craig Ross, performed by Lenny Kravitz; "Story of My Life" by Mike Ness, performed by Social Distortion; "School's Out" by Michael Bruce, Glenn Buxton, Alice Cooper, Dennis Dunaway, Neal Smith, performed by Alice Cooper; "Let's Talk About Sex" by H. Azor, performed by Salt-N-Pepa; "Road To Nowhere" by David Byrne, performed by Talking Heads; "I'm Nuthin'" by David Baerwald, performed by Ethan Hawke, Jack Irons, Nathan December, Christopher Wagner; "Bed of Roses" by Angie Bianca, performed by The Indians; "Add It Up" by Gordon Gano, performed by Ethan Hawke, Jack Irons, Nathan December, Christopher Wagner; "All I Want is You" by Paul Hewson, Dave Evans, Adam Clayton, Larry Mullen, performed by U2; "Going, Going, Gone" by Ken Stringfellow, Jon Auer, performed by The Posies; "Stay" by Lisa Loeb, performed by Lisa Loeb and Nine Stories; "A Froggy Went a-Courtin'" (traditional), performed by Ethan Hawke; "Flight of the Skajaquada" by and performed by Green Jelly; "I'm Just a Bill" by Dave Frishberg, performed by Winona Ryder; "Revival" by Me Phi Me & CCT, performed by Me Phi Me

Music Supervisor

Karyn Rachman

Music Editor

Andrew Silver

Supervising Sound Editor

Stephen H.Flick

Sound Editors

R.J. Kizer

Elliot Koretz

Marvin Walowitz

Supervising ADR Editor

Judee Flick

ADR Editor

Dan Hegeman

Recordist

Albert Romero

ADR Recordist

Dave McDonald

Sound Mixer

Stephen Halbert

ADR Mixers

Bob Baron

New York:

Paul Vydel

Foley Mixers
Ezra Dweck
Supervising Re-recording Mixer
Rick Alexander
Re-recording Mixers
Jim Bolt
Andy D'Addario
Foley
Joan Rowe
Catherine Rowe

Cast

Winona Ryder
Lelaina Pierce
Ethan Hawke
Troy Dyer
Janeane Garofalo
Vickie Miner
Steve Zahn
Sammy Gray
Ben Stiller
Michael Grates
Swoosie Kurtz
Charlane McGregor
Harry O'Reilly
Wes McGregor
Susan Norfleet
Helen Anne Pierce
Joe Don Baker
Tom Pierce
Renee Zellweger
Tami
James Rothenberg
Rick
John Mahoney
Grant Gubler
Eric Stuart
Damien
Barry Sherman
Production's Producer
Chelsea Lagos
Troy Groupie
Bill Bolender
Truck Driver
Jubal Palmer
Marti Greene
John Walsh
Players
Helen Childress
Waitress
David Pirner
Phineas
Andy Dick
Rock
Keith David
Roger
Anne Meara
Louise
Kevin Pollak
Stand-Up Comic
Amy Stiller
Psychic Phone Partner
Afton Smith
Janine
Pat Crawford Brown
Cashier
Jeff Kahn
Stage Manager
Karen Duffy
Actress "Elaina"
Evan Dando
Actor "Roy"

8,908 feet
99 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
CFI

● Four college friends are graduating, and one, Lelaina – who is making a video documenting their thoughts about their various futures – is giving the valedictorian speech. She invokes the ideals of the 60s, and wonders where this leaves Class of 94, facing a less secure world. The four, Lelaina, Vicky, Sammy and Troy, all live in the same house. Lelaina, whose father supports her, gets a job in TV, as assistant to chat-show host Grant Gubler, who ignores all her ideas. Vicky and Lelaina meet Mike, a young video executive for In Your Face TV, when their cars collide. Lelaina and Mike go on a date, where she mentions her video. Although Mike is far from hip to the household's lifestyle, he is fascinated by the project.



Her generation: Winona Ryder

Back home, Troy goads Lelaina for dating Mike, and they fall out. After losing her job by making a fool of Gubler on air, she tries a string of no-hope alternatives, then gives up. Vicky and her father both tell her to shape up. Meanwhile Mike has screened her video for In Your Face TV, who love it.

Arriving to take Lelaina to a screening of the now-edited video, Mike gets into a sneering match with the far more articulate Troy. The video – titled *Reality Bites* – has been jazzed up beyond all recognition, with pop songs as flip commentary. Lelaina is outraged and storms out, arriving back at the house to pour her heart out to Troy. They make love. Next morning, he hurries off, upsetting her. That evening, Lelaina turns up to watch his band play. Mike arrives to apologise. She gets into an argument with Troy, and walks out again. Next day Troy flies home to Chicago, to his ill father. After weeks sadly thinking, Lelaina orders a cab to the airport; out of it steps Troy, whose father has died. They make up. As the credits roll, we see clips from the glib TV show Mike will make out of Lelaina's and Troy's story.

As a comedy of confusions, *Reality Bites* exhibits most of the confusions it wants to nail. Then it adds a few all its own – as if Mike, the likeable, uncomprehending character played by director Ben Stiller, were the real brains behind it. Mike can never quite get the argot or the references right – but in a film which devotes its first two thirds to a near impenetrable stream of pop and TV references, often improvised by the actors (as the film flicks expertly and seamlessly between film and video, steadicam and hand-held), the use of music always seems ever so slightly wrong. Vicky collects 70s memorabilia, but sings along impassioned to New Wave college bands like Squeeze and The Knack; Mike plays rap on his in-car stereo, but waxes nostalgic about Peter Frampton. Perhaps these are the perils of tie-in: better no music than the only music you can negotiate within the budget.

Pop reference demands absolute particularity to communicate; the trade-off for apparent triviality of shared reference has to be its precision, in-depth knowledge of the superficial being the mark of true, disenchanted seriousness. In such all-important throw-aways, the film, a neatly layered construct of films within films, never quite gets its rhythm. In fact, Lelaina's slacker language is not much more convincing than Mike's. It comes close, but really this is another missed opportunity

to cast Winona in the role she was born for – the face of her age.

Every now and then the film is genuinely smart and funny, mostly when Vicky is on screen. She briskly announces, "We're late for a jeans-folding seminar: let's locomote" (she works at The Gap), or, deadpanning, outside the clinic, into Lelaina's vid-cam, "Free Clinic Aids Test: the rite of passage for our generation. We're so lucky." Vicky's powerhouse character is a joy, a collage of never-before-matched stereotypes: she's happily promiscuous, she's good at her job, she's sensible, she's relentlessly smart-mouthed, even in the face of Aids. Mike, too, is simultaneously nerdy and professional successful, a solid, contradictory sitcom cartoon. But the movie makes Troy its moral centre, and Troy is a pain in the neck.

Teen emotions have rarely made it onto the screen. The problem lies in the immutability of on-screen personas, where the inner is all broadcast by the outer – and what the outer is wearing, or singing along to. If you're portraying something as-serious-as-your-life, you think in terms of inner fixity. When it's something confused and provisional, which the key stages of teen character often are, you end up with the depthless flibbertigibbet. On screen you only ever get one or the other. Ethan Hawke's Troy is all fixity, a 24-hour-a-day taste fascist, his self-absorbed no-compromise negativity intolerable, his creative intelligence dubious (he's a Greenwich Village folkie out of a 60s movie about beatniks). Lelaina, meanwhile, is all 80s mutability and surface: that is, until she chooses Troy over Mike. Truly, idealism is suffering – it must be. To catch the spirit of the 90s, Troy should have paired off with Mike; or else Mike, goaded once too often, should have killed Troy. Perhaps, instead of the rather bogus true-love-triumphs plot-closure we get, there should have been a series of endings, *Wayne's World* style; as well as the *Graduate* ending, the *Easy Rider* ending, the *Something Wild* ending, the *Scoby Doo* ending...

The film does better when it comes to trash TV references – perhaps because these are the meat of the characters' comedy banter and peripheral to serious points being made, about idealism or about, as Lelaina puts it, "people trying to find out their identity without heroes or role models". Lelaina intends her documentary as Fred Wiseman for the 90s; In Your Face TV turns it into a cross between *The Living Soap* and *Get Stuffed!*, overdubbing Talking Heads ("The Road to Nowhere", naturally) to hammer home a comic point-missing cynicism. But it's a cynicism that the (real) movie can't muster the evidence to counteract, because – not understanding the dialectics of triviality and precision in pop culture reference – it doesn't know where to look. Most reviewers agree that it's the best bit of the film: perhaps because for all its parodic busyness, it seems less cluttered and anxious to please than the movie it appears in.

Mark Sinker

RoboCop 3

USA 1992

Director: Fred Dekker

Certificate
15

Distributor
Columbia TriStar

Production Company
Orion Pictures Corporation

Producer
Patrick Crowley

Co-producer
Jane Bartelme

Associate Producer
Andy Lamarca

2nd Unit Production Supervisor
Don Simmons

Production Co-ordinators
Teresa M. Yarbrough

2nd Unit:
M. Roxanne Lowery

Unit Production Manager
Patrick Crowley

Location Managers
Greg Lazzaro

2nd Unit:
Maida Morgan

Post-production Supervisors
Paul A. Levin

Katherine Morris
Blair Clark

Post-production Co-ordinator
Jennifer Chatfield

2nd Unit Director
Conrad E. Palmisano

Assistant Directors
Steve Fisher

Thomas Irvine
John Wildermuth

W. Alexander Ellis
Maggie Murphy

2nd Unit:
J. Thomas Archuleta

Cathy Roszell
Steven Jacobs

Casting
Atlanta:

Shay Griffin
Frank Miller

Screenplay
Fred Dekker

Story
Frank Miller

Based on characters created by Edward
Neumeier, Michael Miner

Script Supervisors
Gail Hunter

2nd Unit:
Toni Pezone

Director of Photography
Gary B. Kibbe

2nd Unit Director of Photography
Frank Holgate

Camera Operators
Edwin Myers

Paul Varrieur
2nd Unit:

Robert Presley
Jeff Moore

David Conley
Steadicam Operator

Robert Presley
Video Supervisor

Rick Whitfield
Video Editors

Al Abramski
Michael Matassa

Video Camera
Tom Young

Special Photography Effects
VCE:

Peter Kuran
Photographic Effects:

Paul Gentry
Bill Conner

Gary George
Gary Zietlow

Optical Effects:
Dave Emerson

Brian Griffin
Todd Hall

Rick Hannigan
Gary Martin

Animation Effects:
Kevin Kutchaver

Pam Vick
Computer Animation:

Littleton Brothers
Editorial:

Jo Martin
Co-ordinator:

Marilyn Nave
Stop Motion Animation

Sequences
Phil Tippet

Tippet Company Crew:
FX Camera:

Peter Kozachik
Eric Swenson

FX Production Supervisor:
Julie Roman Tippet

Model Makers:
Paula Lucchesi

Merrick Cheney
Opticals:

Harry Walton/Image FX
Computer Graphics:

Craig Hayes
Adam J. Valdez

Mouldmaker:
John Reed III

Armatures:
Tom St Amand

Blair Clark
Robocop Designed and

Created by
Rob Bottin

Rob Bottin Productions
Project Co-ordinators:

Fernando Favila
Laura Onspaugh

Roboteam Chief:
Dennis Pawlik

Roboteam Dressers:
Robert Lonergan

Alec Chorges
Robocop Prosthetic:

Stephen Dupuis
Delta City & Dream

Sequences
Pacific Data Images:

Art Director:
Rebecca Marie

Digital Effects Supervisor:
Jamie Dixon

Animators:
Kevin Rafferty

Ray Giarrantana
Producers:

Michele Ferrone
Julia Gibson

Johnny Rehab Commercial
Director:

David Silverman
Producers:

Rough Draft Studios
Animators:

Bret Haaland
Gregg Vanzo

Matte Artists
Rocco Gioffre

Tim Cobb
Matte Cameraman

Paul Curley
Editors

Bert Lovitt
Additional:

Danny Retz
Production Designer

Hilda Stark
Art Director

Cate Bangs
Set Director

Robert J. Franco
Set Dressers

Wren Boney
Steve Blustein

Patrick Fuhrman
Derek Wilson

Maryann Garvin
Talley Mulligan

Robert Tate Nichols
Wesley Wright

Daniel Foster
2nd Unit:

Terrence Gibeny
Max Bernardi

Storyboard Artists
Len Morganti

Keith Tucker

Special Effects Supervisor

Jeff Jarvis
Costume Design

Ha Nguyen
Costume Supervisor

Alonzo Wilson
Make-up

Key:
Katie Bihl

2nd Unit:
Patrice Coleman

Hair stylist
Key:

Emanuel Millar
2nd Unit:

Patrice Coleman
Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title
Music

Basil Poledouris
Music Performed by

Synthesizer:
Michael Boddicker

Orchestrations
Gregg Mitchell

Music Editor
Tom Villano

Songs
"Here Comes Santa

Claus" by Gene Autry,
Oakley Haldeman,

performed by Gene
Autry; "Blue

Christmas" by Billy
Hayes, Jay Johnson,

performed by Elvis
Presley; "He's So

Strange" by Charlotte
Caffrey, Jane Wiedlin,

Leonard Phillips, Glen
Custis, performed by

The Go Go's; "Keep It
To Yourself" by Alan

Mirikitani, performed
by B B Chung King

Supervising Sound Editor
Paul Bruce Richardson

Supervising ADR Editor
Uncle Jay Kamen

ADR Editors
Vickie Samson

S. Rae Buck
S.A. Burrow

Dialogue/Foley Editors
Julie Feiner

David Kulczycki
Larry Mann

Marshall Winn
Art Director:

ADR Recordists
ADR:

Deborah de Gorter
Mike Cerone

Foley Recordist
Brian Ruberg

Sound Mixers
Kirk Francis

2nd Unit:
Mary Ellis

ADR Mixers
Weldon Brown

Paul Zydel
Foley Mixer

Dean Drabin
Scoring Mixer

Sound Re-recordists
Andy Nelson

Steve Pederson
Tom Perry

Paul Massey
Robert Glass

Sound Effects Editors
John Haeny

Myron Nettinga
Foley Walkers

Robin Harlan
Sarah Monat

2nd Unit ADR Group
Co-ordinator

Burton Sharp
Stunt Co-ordinators

Dick Hancock
Conrad E. Palmisano

Armourer
Mike Gibbons

Cast
Robert Burke

Alex J. Murphy/
Robocop

Nancy Allen
Officer Anne Lewis

Rip Torn
The CEO

John Castle
Paul McDaggett

Jill Hennessy

Dr Marie Lazarus

CCH Pounder
Bertha

Mako
Kanemitsu

Robert Do'Qui
Sergeant Reed

Remy Ryan
Nikko

Bruce Locke
Otomo

Stanley Anderson
Zack

Stephen Root
Conantz

Daniel Von Borgen
Moreno

Felton Perry
Johnson

Bradley Whitford
Fleck

Mario Machado
Casey Wong

Jodi Long
Nikko's Mom

John Posey
Nikko's Dad

SD Nemeth
Bixby Snyder

Edith Ivey
Elderly Woman in

Barthrobe
Curtis Taylor

Rehab
Judson Vaughn

Seltz
Ken Strong

Rehab Patrol
Kenny Raskin

Security Monitor
Blaise Corrigan

Officer at Ordnance
Depot

Jeff Garlin
Doughnut Jerk

Lee Arenberg
Hold-up Man

Randy Randolph
Cop in Doughnut Shop

Shane Black
Donnelly

John Mesci
Jensen

Randall Taylor
Starkweather

James Lorinz
Upset Driver

Bryan Mercer
Kenny Jones

Splatterpunk
Doug Yasuda

Kanemitsu's Aide
Mark Gowan

Sleazy Lawyer
Thomas Boyd

Hooker
Eddie Billups

Man at Booking Desk
Mark Gordon

Techie in Robochamber
Angie Bolling

Ellen Murphy
Graciela Marin

Cop with Body Armour
Michael Moss

Unfortunate Rehab
Dianne Butler

Woman on Vidphone
David de Vries

Informative Yuppie
Gary Bullock

Gas Station Clerk
Wilbur Fitzgerald

Rebel with Weapons
Cart

Beth Burns
Teen Prostitute

Lonnie Smith
First Rehab at Hotel

Tommy Chappelle
Hotel Desk Clerk

Rick Seaman
Rehab Driver

Ronn Leggett
Pimp

Eva La Rue
Debbie Dix

Alex Van
Rehab in War Room

9,396 feet
104 minutes

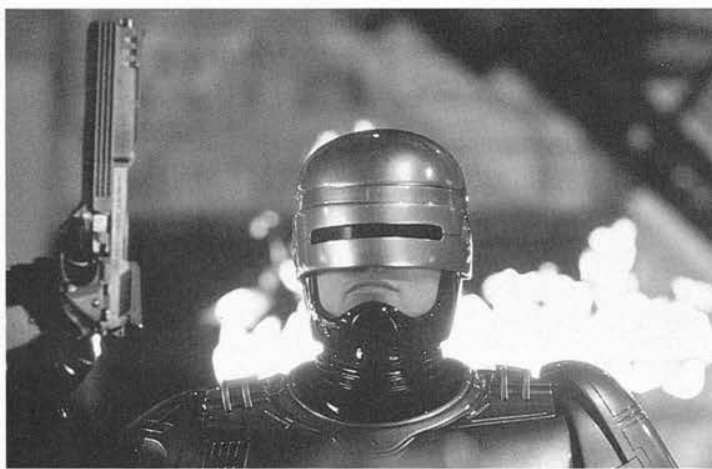
Dolby stereo
In colour

Deluxe

● Detroit, the near future. Omni Consumer Products (OCP) has been bought by the Japanese Kanemitsu Corps, architects of the planned 'Delta City'. In the Cadillac Heights district, tenants refuse to leave to make way for the new development. Spurred on by Bertha and her band of rebels, they oppose the 'Rehab' urban pacification pogroms, causing Omni a \$350 million debt, and leaving them only four days to complete their work. In the latest attack, computer-literate street-urchin Nikko is separated from her parents (who are later executed) and joins the rebels. She helps them reprogramme a guard cyborg, allowing them to loot a state armoury.

Nearby, RoboCop – cybernetically reconstructed policeman Murphy – disobeys an order and rescues police officer Anne Lewis from an encounter with 'Splatterpunk', anarchic marauding street-gangs. Amid the devastation, RoboCop spies Nikko outside a church, and fixes on her image. At Omni HQ, Dr Marie Lazarus disobeys an instruction to implant a micro-neurone barrier in RoboCop's head, thus obliterating any residual traits of Murphy. On an impulse, RoboCop and Lewis return to the church, populated by rebels, just as the Rehab squad, led by Paul McDaggett, arrives. Prevented by Command 4 from firing upon Omni employees, RoboCop is powerless to stop the slaying of Lewis as she defends the escaping rebels.

Wounded, RoboCop follows the rebels to their hide-out, and Nikko removes his automatic tracking device. At Omni HQ, with only three days left, suicides abound as firings occur. Kanemitsu arrives, bringing his secret weapon, the robotic samurai Otomo. Nikko is despatched to bring Dr. Lazarus to the rebel cell to rebuild RoboCop and delete Command 4, which tasks she accomplishes. Among the rebel booty from the armoury, Lazarus identifies a prototype RoboCop flying pack. RoboCop returns to Police HQ and destroys the Rehab Unit, but McDaggett escapes due to a tip-off from rebel spy Coontz. Coontz leads the Rehab squad to the rebel cell, and in a shoot-out Bertha is killed, Lazarus is captured, and McDaggett executes Coontz. At police HQ, McDaggett demands 50 men to take Cadillac Heights, prompting a mass police walk-out. The Rehab squad recruit Splatterpunk soldiers and descend on Cadillac Heights as Lazarus, aided by Nikko, broadcasts revolutionary TV messages from Omni HQ, inciting police and civilians to band together against Rehab. In the rebel cell, RoboCop fights and defeats Otomo before using his flying pack to repel the Rehab warriors. RoboCop returns to Omni HQ where he meets Nikko, Lazarus and McDaggett, and fights multiple Otomo clones. Nikko uses her computer skills to turn the Otomos against each other, thus triggering a fail-safe device. As RoboCop flies Nikko and Lazarus to safety, Omni HQ explodes. Back at Cadillac Heights, Kanemitsu bows his head to RoboCop.



Man in a can: Robert Burke

● After the lavish, pompous disaster of *RoboCop 2*, this cheaper third instalment attempts to recoup some of the lost satirical ground of Paul Verhoeven's original cyberpunk classic, while shedding entirely the gloriously insane violence of yore. Entire scenes from the original are humbly quoted; RoboCop's POV shot during Lazarus' re-birthing exactly mirrors Murphy's original robotic resurrection, while his flashbacks to Murphy family life are similarly familiar. Verhoeven's *Brazil*-style advertising jingles, too. With Peter Weller now too successful to be recalled for the title role, *Dust Devil* star Robert Burke takes over, his facial features approximating Weller's closely enough for make-up effects to affect an adequate substitution.

There is also a relatively intelligent blending of the characters of Lewis, Lazarus and Murphy's wife who, during an affecting dream sequence, meld (via computer morphing) into a single female entity, providing the bridge between Murphy's dormant memories and RoboCop's electronic consciousness. Considering the miserable failure of *RoboCop 2* to expand RoboCop's relationship with Lewis, this development is encouraging. Once again, however, Lewis' shattering injuries from the climax of *RoboCop* are entirely ignored, as are RoboCop's ominous words "They'll fix you." Mysteriously, Lewis simply reappeared in full health, with no mechanical additions.

As well as trying hard to link back to *RoboCop*, scriptwriters Miller and Dekker also owe a heavy debt to James Cameron's sci-fi ground-breakers *Aliens* and *Terminator 2*, both of which establish a 'futuristic nuclear family' theme which *RoboCop 3* plunders and exploits. Not only does Nikko clearly take inspiration from *Aliens'* interstellar urchin Newt, but the final scenes of *RoboCop* also blatantly rehash Cameron's much-discussed and celebrated finales. In *T2*, cyborg-daddy Schwarzenegger sacrifices himself to save Sarah Connor and her son from a hideous future, while in *Aliens*, Hicks, Ripley and adopted daughter Newt sleep soundly as a human family unit. In *RoboCop 3*, these themes are merged into a far shallower image in which cyborg (RoboCop), substitute wife (Lazarus) and adopted daughter (Nikko) bond in perfect har-

mony – man, woman, child and machine, together.

The neatness of this ending is entirely in keeping with the general progress of the *RoboCop* series away from the hard-core nihilism of the original toward more palatable (and markedly less violent) family fodder. Since Verhoeven's original, the syndication of the RoboCop character through children's cartoons, toys, and figures has necessitated a severe softening of the violence in order to retain the lucrative youth market. Thus, *RoboCop 3* goes against the grain of Irvin Kershner's sequel by entirely eschewing visceral bloodletting. Now, when RoboCop torches the Rehab Unit, for example, there are no wanton slayings. Only when saving a young hooker from Rehab rapists does RoboCop shoot to kill, and here the impact wounds are far from fountainous. Clearly, this sanitisation means that any current RoboCop product entirely lacks the brash charm of Verhoeven's creation, and indeed, despite the heavily scripted links with *RoboCop*, there is nothing here in the way of stylistic similarity. While *Variety* accurately described *RoboCop* as "a comic book movie that's definitely not for kids", *RoboCop 3* is unashamed youth fare all the way. Even within such limiting parameters, however, there is still more enjoyable material here than *RoboCop 2*, with all its OTT carnage, could even hint at.

On the technical front, *RoboCop 3* is an extremely mixed bag. Rob Bottin's team, who performed such ostentatious miracles on *The Thing* (and who, it must be said, provided the only relief in *RoboCop 2*), come up trumps with their Otomo make-up, particularly during a lovely jaw-dislocation sequence which is winningly blood-free. Yet all their hard work is undermined in the climactic battle sequence, in which some truly awful superimposition work makes RoboCop's flight of victory entirely laughable. Undoubtedly, there was no money left to go and fix the finale (and the tribulations of production company Orion would have probably have prevented such post-production work), but this is an unforgivable travesty in an otherwise not unsalvageable movie.

Mark Kermode

Rojin Z (Roujin Z)

Japan 1991

Director: Hiroyuki Kitakubo

Certificate

12

Distributor

Manga Entertainment

Production Companies

Tokyo Theaters Co/

The Television Inc/

Movic Co/TV Asahi/

Sony Music

Entertainment

Executive Producer English

Version

Laurence Guinness

Producers

Yasuhito Nomura

Yasuko Kazama

Yoshiaki Motoya

Production

Kiyotaka Yoshida

Yuki Hiko Kadokawa

Yutaka Takahashi

Shugo Matsuo

Chief of Production

Yuzuru Minagawa

Production Director

Fumio Iida

Assistant Directors

Toshiaki Hontani

Sadami Morikawa

Casting

Jill Wilmot

Screenplay/Story

Katsushiro Otomo

Script Adaptation

George Roubicek

Continuity

Toshiaki Hontani

Tatsuyuki Tanaka

Horoyuki Kitakubo

Director of Photography

Hideo Okazaki

Photography

Img

Yoshiki Nakamura

Minoru Koyama

Kyaban

Computer Graphics

Kenichi Abe

Planning

Teruhisa Hida

Tsukasa Ariyoshi

Shinichi Inoue

Character Planning

Kazuhiro Eguchi

Colour Selection

Hiromi Anzai

Animation

Toshio Ikeuchi

Yuji Matsuhara

Mitsumochi Nakasaki

Wombat

Boomerang

Poem Cinema

Animation Checkers

Kokichi Nagaoka

Ritsuko Watanabe

Hiroshi Shirakawa

Layout Artists/Original Art

Koichi Arai

Manabu Obashi

Masano Kobayashi

Ken Honda

Kinji Furumoto

Kyoko Ishida

Kenichi Shimizu

Animation Finishing

Shigeri Nakamura

Hana Production

Studio Egg

Background Artists

Masanobu Kikuchi

Tokuji Hiraki

Editor

Eiko Nishiide

Art Director

Hiroshi Sasaki

Art Creation

Takeshi Kon

Mechanical Design

Katsuhiko Otomo

Mitsuo Iso

MUSIC

Fumi Itakura

Main Theme:

Michio Ogawa

Music Director

Yasunori Honda

Music Producer

Toshihiko Fukaoaka

Song

"Bicycle, Go!" by Fumi

Itakura, Michio Ogawa

Dubbing Director

Michael Bakewell

Dubbing Mixer

Richard King

Sound Re-recorder

Clive Mitchison

Voices

Allan Wenger

Terada

Toni Barry

Haruko

Barbara Barnes

Nobuko

Adam Henderson

Maeda

Jana Carpenter

Norie

Ian Thompson

Kijuro Takazawa

John Jay Fitzgerald

Hasegawa

Graydon Gould

Minagawa

Nicolette McKenzie

Haru

Sean Barrett

Blain Fairman

Nigel Anthony

ACHES

6,989 feet

78 minutes

Original Running Time:

84 minutes

In colour

English version

● 87-year-old widower Kijuro Takazawa is dragged from his home by mysterious officials, much to the alarm of Haruko, the medical student who serves as his home-help. Haruko later discovers that Takazawa has been chosen as a guinea pig in trials of the Z-001, an atomic powered, bio-computer-controlled bed designed to feed, exercise, toilet, bathe and entertain elderly patients. When Takazawa sends a plea for help via the Z-001 to her computer terminal, Haruko breaks into the research centre with her friends Nobuko, Norie and

Maeda. Before project manager Terada and his technical assistant Hasegawa can arrest the intruders, the Z-001 becomes mobile and 'drives' Takazawa back home, with the student nurses on board. Terada follows and retrieves the Z-001 with a great show of force, but is later carpeted by senior bureaucrat Minagawa for allowing such a lapse of security.

Assigned to work in an old people's ward, Haruko and her friends learn that one of their patients is an expert computer hacker; they ask him to try to contact the Z-001. When he succeeds, Haruko transmits a consoling image of Takazawa's late wife Haru. Seemingly possessed by the spirit of Haru, the Z-001 becomes mobile again, breaks out of the research centre and heads at across country, assimilating other machines as it goes. The army is mobilised to stop it. While her friends and the old hacker stay in computer contact with the runaway machine (and learn that it is heading for Kamakura, where Takazawa and Haru used to holiday), Haruko manages to board Terada's helicopter as it gives chase. Hasegawa reveals that the Z-001 is actually a cover for a military research project; he activates the military prototype Alpha to halt the Z-001. But Alpha is assimilated too, and the Z-001 is finally immobilised by Haruko, who (guided by her friends on the ward) shatters its core bio-chip. Takazawa's cat slips unnoticed out of the wreckage.

Some time later, Haruko is nursing Takazawa in a hospital when the 'reborn' Z-001 comes looking for Takazawa. It is controlled by the spirit of Haru, which inhabits the cat, and is now using the Great Buddha of Kamakura as its main frame...

● *Rojin Z* (which means 'Old Person Z' – the export title *Roujin Z* is an aberrant transliteration) announces itself as "A Work by Katsuhiro Otomo", and it's Otomo's hand that is seen writing the calligraphy for the main title. But the film is less a follow-up to the globally successful *Akira* than a sardonic critique of it. Otomo provided the plot, script and machinery designs but opted not to direct, partly because the budget precluded sophisticated multipane animation of the kind seen in *Akira* itself, and partly because – after nearly eight years' work on the print and film versions of *Akira* – he was more eager to turn to his live-action project *World Apartment Horror*,



Vintage animation: 'Rojin Z'

also released in 1991.

Like *World Apartment Horror*, which attacks Japanese racism within the framework of a parody of *yakuza* movies, *Rojin Z* is anchored in immediate social realities. It tackles three distinct issues, all of them topical in Japan: health-care for the elderly; the stand-off between traditional values and modern technology; and the Right's covert plans to remilitarise the country. These social-political concerns implicitly distance the film from the outright fantasy that dominates *Akira*; at the same time, the plot's science-fantasy elements amount to a farcical parody of *Akira*'s cyberpunk kicks and cosmic rebirths. Where *Akira* centred on a miraculous psycho-kinetic child, *Rojin Z* posits a psycho-kinetic cat, possessed by the spirit of a dead-but-raunchy granny, interested only in reviving her sexual relationship with her decrepit husband – and makes her the nemesis of the entire militarist establishment. And the commitment to female strength is followed through in the characterisation of the intrepid heroine Haruko, whereas every male in sight (except for the defiant old computer hacker) is weak, cowardly or vainly self-important.

All of this makes for engaging entertainment, not least because it so resolutely counters the expectations of the adolescent males who made up the core audience for *Akira*. For them, though, there are Otomo's characteristically imaginative machine designs, and there is also evidence of what looks like Otomo's continuing creative dialogue with Shinya Tsukamoto, creator of the *Tetsuo* movies. The clash here between the mutated Z-001 and the ominous Alpha, a sleek engine of destruction, takes the notions of organic machinery and bio-mechanical assimilation one stage beyond *Tetsuo*, just as *Tetsuo* developed the notion of metal-flesh fusion introduced in *Akira*. Both directors deny that this 'dialogue' is conscious, but the visual evidence seems incontrovertible.

The only real let-down in *Rojin Z* is the character design of Haruko; Kazuhiro Eguchi has drawn her as a round-eyed moppet of the type seen everywhere in Japanese schlock made-for-video animation. The animation itself is several notches higher than the Japanese norm, although some way short of the visual glories of *Akira*; pans across static backgrounds are kept to a minimum, and the director Kitakubo knows how to generate both pace and the illusion of pace. And Michael Bakewell's carefully produced English version generally does the film proud, apart from the strange decision to Americanise the military references. This seems all the more misjudged in the light of the film's specific visual references to Japan. After all, this is a film that climaxes with an appearance of the Kamakura Daibutsu, the huge bronze Amitabha that has long been a magnet for working-class tourists from Tokyo, of the type represented so lovingly by Takazawa and his late wife.

Tony Rayns

Sankofa

USA/Germany/Ghana/Burkina Faso 1993

Director: Haile Gerima

Certificate 15
Distributor Electric Triangle
Production Company Negod-Gwad productions
 In co-production with The Ghana National Commission on Culture
DiProCi of Burkina Faso
NDR/WDR Television In association with Channel Four Television
Producer Haile Gerima
Co-producer Shirikiana Aina
Line Producer Ada Marie Babino
Production Co-ordinators Carmen Franczyk
Ghana: Salome Gerima
Motandi Ouoba
Production Managers Charles Butler
Knuckles
Ghana: Nat Lomo-Mainoo
Assistant Directors Andrew Millington
Babeto Matthews
Screenplay Haile Gerima
Script Supervisors Cynthia Hanes
Ghana: Motandi Ouoba
Director of Photography Augustin Cubano
Opticals Reel Effects Inc
Editor Haile Gerima
Production Designer Kerry Marshall
Set Dressers Michael N.O. Amon-Kwafo
Costume Design Tracey White
Wardrobe Alexandra Duah
Make-up Henry Brown
Ghana: Vincentia Akwetey
Title Design Qevin Weathersby
Optical Titles Miguel Muñoz
Music David J. White
Songs "Take My Hand Precious Lord" by Thomas A. Dorsey, performed by Aretha Franklin; "Jewe (You Are the One)" by Babatunde Olatunji, performed by Mickey Hart, Planet Drum;
 "You Don't Know How it Feels" by Nataska Hasan, Rashida Turner-El, "Rising Sun", "How Can I Bear This Burden" performed by Nataska Hasan; "Buzzard" by Haile Gerima, David White, Steve Langley, Nataska Hasan, performed by Nataska Hasan, Steve Langley, Reverb; "Spirit of the Dead" by Haile Gerima, performed by Oscar Brown Jr
Sound Charles Dixon
Ghana: Yassala B. Sessouma
Foley Mixer Michael Langer
Sound Re-recording Mixers Don White
David Appleby
Lou Solakofski
Foley Artist Marco Costanzo
Cast
Kofi Ghanaba
 Sankofa, the Divine Drummer
Oyafunmike Ogundano
 Mona/Shola
Alexandra Duah
 Nunu
Nick Medley
 Joe
Mutabaruka
 Shango
Afemo Omilami
 Noble Ali
Reginald Carter
 Father Raphael
Mzuri
 Lucy
Jimmy Lee Savage
 Mussa
Hasinatu Camara
 Jumma
Jim Faircloth
 James
Stanley Michelson
 Mr Lafayette
John A. Mason
 Big Boy
Louise Reid
 Esther
Roger Doctor
 Nathan
Alditz McKenzie
 Kuta
Chrispan Rigby
 Photographer
Maxwell Parris
 Baby Ngozi
Hossana Ghanaba
 Linguist for Divine Drummer
11,197 feet
124 minutes
In colour

● Mona, a black American model, is posing for a white photographer on the ramparts of Ghana's infamous Cape Coast castle, where slaves used to be imprisoned before being shipped across the Atlantic. An old African man in traditional robes shouts at her, "Back to your past! Return to your source!" She is shaken, as are a passing group of white tourists, whom the man also attempts to intimidate. Their guide explains that he is Sankofa, who claims to be the guardian of the slaves' spirits and

who beats his drums every day to keep in contact with them.

Mona follows the sightseers down into the castle dungeon, hearing the guide explain how the captive Africans were treated. The door slams behind her, and she finds herself transported back in time to the slave era, surrounded by silent, manacled men and women, and branded with a red-hot iron. As Shola, a house slave on an American sugar plantation, she is repeatedly raped by her master, but finds solace in the company of field-slaves, especially her beloved, the rebellious Shango, and the wise, powerful Nunu, who is said to have killed an overseer with her magical powers.

The slaves are treated very cruelly, not only by their white masters but also by the head slaves, among them Nunu's mulatto son Joe, who is set apart by his embrace of the white man's Christianity. A group of slaves, among them the pregnant Kuta, run away, trying to get to the hills where escapees live freely; they are recaptured and fatally flogged. Taking hold of Kuta's dying body, Nunu delivers her child. Called Kwame, 'the witness', the infant is raised by the other slaves. Noble Ali, one of the head slaves, is conscience-stricken by his part in the death of the baby's mother, and joins the 'clandestine rebels'.

After an unsuccessful rebellion, slaves are suspended in cages to be eaten by vultures. Nunu is sent away to be sold, but is happy to be rejected and sent back as too old. Shola runs away but is recaptured and tortured by the master and the priest Father Raphael. Her friend Juma wants to sleep with Joe, but he rejects her. Shola persuades Shango to give him a love potion, but it is poisonous and Joe goes mad. Nunu chases him to the river and saves his life by purging him, but he responds by drowning her. In an agony of remorse, he takes her body to the church and lays it on the altar. When Father Raphael abuses Nunu as a heathen, Joe kills him and locks himself in the church, which is eventually burnt down with him inside. No sign of Nunu's body is found.

There is another, larger rebellion. Shola kills her master as he threatens to rape her again. The escaping slaves are hunted down, but Shola runs on until in death her soul flies back to Africa. Mona emerges naked from the dungeon. A woman clothes her in traditional dress. She spurns the photographer and joins a group of black people sitting in contemplation at the ocean's edge. A woman who looks like Nunu smiles at her.

● 'Sankofa' is a word from the African Akan language which means 'returning to your roots, recuperating what you've lost and moving forward'. That sounds like a straightforward process, but in deciding to confront the issue of slavery, *Sankofa*'s Ethiopian-born producer-writer-director Haile Gerima was setting out on a rocky path.

From its impressive opening ►

◀ sequence onwards, *Sankofa* strives for, and by and large achieves, a cinematic language worthy of the importance of its subject matter. The mesmeric drumming and hollering of Khofi Ghanaba underpins our introduction to powerful visual images of birds and the African coast line that will recur throughout the film (Ghanaba's past as respected American jazz musician Guy Warren, and adviser to Ghana's President Nkrumah renders him doubly qualified for the role). An urgent voice sounds a lengthy clarion call: "Stolen Africans... from Alabama to Surinam... step out and claim your story". The film's titles also benefit from a snappy ripple effect.

The dice seem to be loaded from the off against Mona. With her tacky swimsuit and dyed orange hair, she is meant to be a grotesque figure, and there is a hint of spite in the way the camera first lingers over her branding, then celebrates the unsmiling humility with which she finally takes her place among the Africans at the water's edge. This slant is hardly surprising, as Gerima's intentions are avowedly didactic – to address "the continuing problem of those persons in the Africa diaspora who neglect their own history".

Once the action has switched to the plantation, this didacticism is never awkward. *Sankofa's* treatment of its painful subject matter is commendably unexploitative. It is not by any means unrelentingly grim, resisting the temptation to wallow in the horrors it depicts. The white people in the film – photographer, tourists and slave-masters alike – are not exactly sympathetic, but then why should they be?

Most of *Sankofa's* occasional lighter moments are supplied by the Ghanaian actress Alexandra Duah, who is superb in the potentially irritating fount-of-all-wisdom role of Nunu. But all the performances are good. Oyafunmike Ogunlano succeeds in carrying the part of Mona/Shola through what might have been an "it was only a dream" ending. The Jamaican dub poet Mutabaruka makes a persuasive screen debut as the rebellious Shango, and Nick Medley is effectively tormented as the benighted Joe.

The real star of the film, though, is the man behind the camera. The cinematography is outstanding: from the peaceful bustle of the Ghanaian coast to the wishing canes of the American plantation, Gerima creates an extraordinary sense of motion. David White's score, blending chants and jazz, drums and blues, makes a vital contribution to this, and the dual symbolism of the vulture, as harbinger of both death and escape, is more powerful than anyone raised on *Bird's Eye* being the bird of freedom has any right to expect. But it is the stately progress of the camera across a living landscape that leaves *Sankofa's* most abiding impression. Other film-makers have struggled to make such a grand and historical impact on 30 times this budget.

Ben Thompson

Shopping

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Paul Anderson

Certificate

18

Distributor

Rank

Production Company

An Impact Pictures production for Channel Four Films
In association with PolyGram
Kuzui Enterprises
WMG

Producer

Jeremy Bolt

Line Producer

Laurie Borg

Production Co-ordinator

Lucinda Sturgis

Location Manager

Tony Clarkson

Assistant Directors

Alan J. Wands

Simon Moseley

David Gilchrist

Casting

Jane Frisby

Screenplay

Paul Anderson

Script Supervisor

Caroline Sax

Director of Photography

Tony Imi

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Arthur Wooster

Camera Operator

Mike Proudfoot

Steadicam Operators

Nigel Kirtton

Kate Robinson

Editor

David Stiven

Production Designer

Max Gottlieb

Art Director

Chris Townsend

Set Dresser

Debbie Wilson

Storyboard Artists

Simon Hicks

Richard Haigh

Special Effects

Vendetta FX

Costume Design

Howard Burden

Make-up Artist

Pebbles

Hairstylist

Michelle Daniels

Title Design

General Screen

Enterprises

Music/Music Conductor

Barrington Pheloung

Music Associate

Jim Gottlieb

Music Editor

Tim Arrowsmith

Songs/Music Extracts

"The Theme" by Andrew Weatherall,

Jagz Kooner, Gary Burns, performed

by Sabres of Paradise;

"Why Don't You Take Me", "Fallen" by and

performed by One Dove; "Friends" by

Elton John, Bernie Taupin, performed

by Elton John; "Highlander" by Jez

Willis, performed

by Utah Saints; "Rise" by Steve Osborne, Paul

Oakenfold, performed

by Perfecto; "The Witch" by Gerald

Roslie, performed

by Wool; "Pursuit" by Mike Edwards,

performed by Jesus Jones; "The Meet",

"Halcyon + On + On" by and performed

by Orbital; "Water Pistol Man" by Michael

Pranti, Chuck Treece,

performed by Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy; "Call it What You Want" by Matthew David Hanson, Keith Shocklee, Carl Ridenhour, Kurt Cobain, Chris Novoselic, David Grohl, performed by Credit To the Nation; "Vibe the Joint" by and performed by Kaliphz; "Wake Up" by and performed by Stereo MC's; "No Comply" by and performed by Senser; "Honest Joe" by James, performed by James, Sabres of Paradise; "Waiting" by Siobhan Fahey, Barry Maguire, performed by Shakespears Sister; "Drowning Man" by U2, performed by Smith & Mighty; "Don't Look Back" by and performed by EMF; "Heaven or Hell" by Herby Azor, Steve Azor, M. Oliver, performed by Salt-N-Pepa; "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, performed by Rebecca van der Post, Clio Gould, Madeline Butcher, Monica Scott

Sound Editors

Les Wiggins

Dialogue:

Archie Luddski

Foley Editor

Rocky Phelan

Sound Recordist

Colin Nicolson

Re-recording Mixers

John Hayward

Nick Le Messurier

David Anderson

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jim Dowdall

Cast

Sadie Frost

Jo

Jude Law

Billy

Sean Pertwee

Tommy

Fraser James

Be Bop

Sean Bean

Venning

Marianne Faithfull

Bev

Jonathan Pryce

Conway

Danny Newman

Monkey

Lee Whitlock

Pony

Ralph Ineson

Dix

Eammon Walker

Peters

Jason Isaacs

Market Trader

Chris Constantinou

Yuppie

Tilly Vosburgh

Mrs Taylor

Melanie Hill

Sarah

Grant Russell

Store Owner

James Hill

Lippy Kid

Clint Dyer

Car Thief

Brian Croucher

Billy's Dad

Simon Bates
Polly Moore
Vivian Mann
Julian Sandell
Tommy's Gang
Sarah Phillips
Reporter's Voice
DJ Tim
Himself
Kate Lauren
Policewoman
Paul McNeilly
Dave Roberts
Simon Austin
Sidney Cole
Chris Armstrong
Policemen

Paul Wong
Venning's Minder
Shion Abdullah
Local Kid
Francis Pope
Leon Black
Anthony Lee
Kids
Becky van der Post
Clio Gould
Monica Scott
Philip Bagenal
String Quartet

9,638 feet
107 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour

● In the present or near future, the young people of a crumbling British city are effectively out of control. Local hero joy-rider Billy comes out of prison and is met by his Northern Irish friend Jo. They swap the car she has stolen for a BMW and escape from the police at high speed. Billy is reunited with his peers, including chief acolytes Monkey and Be Bop, at a car thieves' underground hangout. A police raid breaks up the assembly, and Billy returns home only to find that his father, who won't speak to him, has moved all his possessions out of the flat to a caravan in deserted docklands.

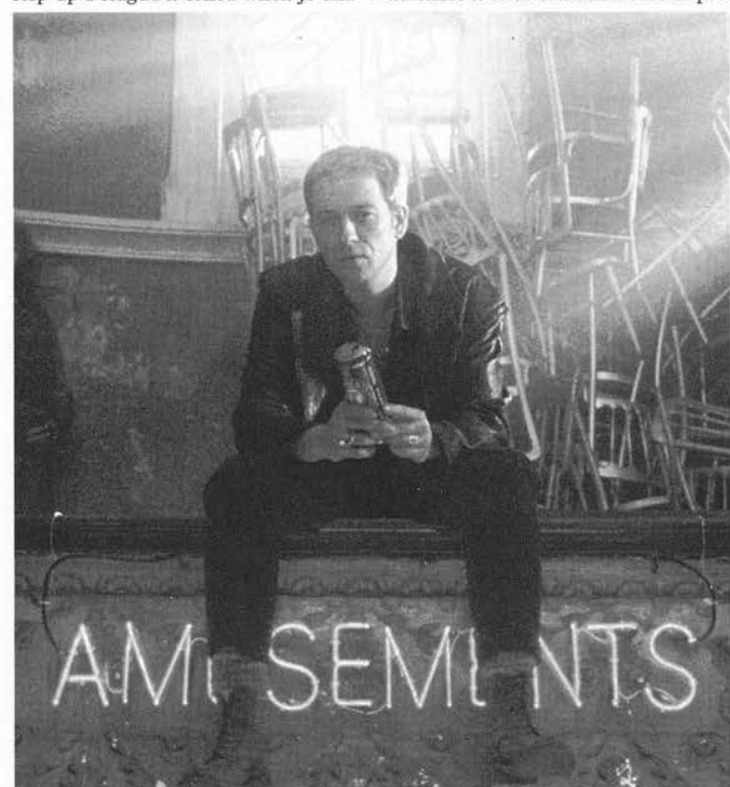
Police chief Conway visits Billy and tries to intimidate him into curtailing his joy-riding activities. Rival gang-leader Tommy is not pleased to see him on the loose, either. Equally vicious to police and thieves alike, this psychotic entrepreneur has built a profitable drug-dealing and stolen goods business, which Billy's exploits threaten to undermine. Venning, a local gangster made good, places an order with Tommy for stolen goods from the huge Alaska department store. His chance to step up a league is foiled when Jo and

Billy ram-raid the store before he can. They take only an Alessi kettle and a pair of sunglasses, and in escaping lead the pursuing police into a violent ambush – a spectacular coup which further undermines Tommy's pretensions to top dog status.

Less than pleased, Tommy takes a gang to the caravan, but Billy escapes with Jo and takes up residence in an old railway yard. He returns later to find his makeshift home destroyed and all his possessions in the water. At a club, Billy flirts with other girls because Jo will not be his lover. Afterwards, and much to her displeasure, he plays chicken with oncoming lorries on the dual carriageway. She tries to persuade Billy to leave town with her, but he won't. Determined to pull off one last big job, he settles on the apparently impregnable new shopping centre Retail Land. He comes off worse in a battle of wits with Tommy and drives into a trap. The police are waiting and in the race to get away, all four would-be ram-raiders – Monkey and Be Bop, Jo and Bill – meet untimely ends.

● It will be interesting to see if *Shopping*, the latest in a long-overdue mini-wave of violent British directorial debuts, replicates *The Young Americans'* surprisingly disastrous showing at the box-office. If it does, it will be hard to resist the conclusion that we prefer our action hokum imported, and that well-mannered costume drama is the only way forward for British cinema.

Newcastle-raised writer/director Paul Anderson is making a career out of joy-riding – his short film *Speed* also celebrated the thrills and perils of illicit motoring. Such a concentration on home-grown forms of youthful deviance is to be commended. The pro-



Raiding the bargain basement: Sean Pertwee

gramme notes for the US Sundance Festival describe the practice of ram-raiding (for which 'shopping' is a self-consciously flip euphemism), in terms that will bring a flush of pride to any patriotic cheek, as "a phenomenon that has yet to reach these shores."

Where *Young Americans* looked at 90s drugs-and-dancing delinquency from the outside in, Anderson's film aims to see things more from the inside out. There are some good things in it. The London docklands locations are very well used - this mythic city with its wastelands and skeletal concrete structures actually looks and feels more like London than many more overt representations of the capital, and the music is excellent. But, *Shopping* is so obsessed with its own hipness that it ends up being totally embarrassing.

The first chase scene, where our heroes in their stolen BMW leave policemen languishing in their wake, is a microcosm of the film's self-indulgent failings as well as its kinetic strengths. Jo rummages through the glove compartment and finds a box of Ferraro Rocher chocolates, which she hurls from the speeding vehicle with a contemptuous cry of "Yuppie food!" At moments like this, and seconds later when she turns her attention to the in-car tape collection ("Dire Straits - shite!"), you can almost feel the established order trembling. *Shopping*'s attempts to score moral points off the straight world are entirely laughable throughout. "I can't believe people pay that much for a kettle," Billy observes sententiously, as he steals one.

Jude Law's commendable attempts at lean and hungry desperado-dom ("You're asking for trouble, Billy" - "What else is there?") are tragically scuppered by his resemblance to *The Word* presenter Terry Christian. Sadie Frost's Northern Irish accent isn't bad, and she struggles bravely with such pearls of 'sassy' dialogue as "You don't get humped, you don't get dumped"; but her character ultimately scales the same Olympian heights of absurdity as Ally Sheedy's in *The Breakfast Club*. It's Sean Pertwee who will probably do best out of this; his Tommy has a bankable cartoon menace, though it does at the same time succeed in making Gary Oldman's absurd drug dealer in *True Romance* look like a well-rounded characterisation.

The film's more established stars, Jonathan Pryce, Marianne Faithfull and Sean Bean, look on benignly - a little too benignly perhaps. There is an inescapable whiff of condescension, of letting the kids have their day, about this whole project. The kids themselves are a carelessly observed bunch; *Shopping*'s untamed youth are an improbably united front of tough but trusty black kids and leather-jacketed middle-class grebes. As a result, a film which aims at hard-hitting dystopian drama, a shotgun wedding of *Bonnie and Clyde* and *A Clockwork Orange*, too often feels more like a playground punch-up between *Grange Hill* and *The Double Deckers*.

Ben Thompson

Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould

Canada 1993

Director: François Girard

Certificate

U

Distributor

Electric Pictures

Production Company

Rhombus Media Inc

With the participation of Telefilm Canada/

Ontario Film Development Corporation

In association with Canadian Broadcasting Corporation/Société

Radio-Canada/NOS - Television/

RTP - Portugal/OY Yleisradio AB (YLE)/

The National Film Board of Canada/

Glenn Gould Limited

Executive Producer

National Film Board of Canada;

Dennis Murphy

Producers

Niv Fichman

Rhombus Media;

Larry Weinstein

Barbara Willis Sweete

National Film Board of Canada;

Michael Allder

Line Producer

Amy Kaufman

Associate Producer

Rhombus Media;

Daniel Iron

Technical Production Co-ordinator

National Film Board of Canada;

Linda Payette

Production Co-ordinators

Karen Wooley

2nd Unit Europe;

Matthew Kitchen

Production Manager

2nd Unit Montreal;

Michel Siry

Co-unit Managers

John LaRose

Remo Girolato

Location Manager

Alix Davis

Post-production Supervisor

National Film Board of Canada;

Richard Michaud

Post-production Co-ordinators

Montreal:

Création Montage

Toronto:

Catherine Huni

National Film Board of Canada;

Bryan Innes

Cast

Deirdre Bowen

Assistant Directors

Jennifer Jonas

Leonard Farlinger

Screenplay

François Girard

Don McKellar

Additional:

Nick McKinney

Script Supervisor

Leslie Druker

Director of Photography

Alain Dostie

Pixillation Camera

2nd Unit Montreal:

Sylvaine Dufaux

Steadicam Operator

David Crane

Photo Animation

Lynda Pelley

Pierre Landry

Animation

'Gould Meets McLaren';

Norman McLaren

Editor

Gaëtan Huot

Design Consultant

Charles Dunlop

Associate Art Director

John Rubino

Set Decorator

Alexa Anthony

Lead Set Dresser

Ian Nothnagel

Costume Design

Linda Muir

Wardrobe Supervisor

Derek Baskerville

Make-up

Kathryn Casault

Hairstylist

Marcelo Padovani

Titles

Louise Overy

Barry Wood

Music Performed by

Piano:

Glenn Gould

'Opus #1':

Violin 1:

Bruno Monsaingeon

Violin 2:

Gilles Apap

Viola:

Jean-Marc Apap

Cello:

Marc Coppey

Music Extracts

"Aria" and "Variation

#19" from *The Goldberg*

Variations, "Two-Part

Invention #13" from

Two- and Three-Part

Inventions, "Prelude"

and "Fugue #14" from

English Suite #5, "Prelude #1" and

"Prelude #2" from

The Well Tempered Clavier

Vol. 1, "Gigue" and

"Prelude" from *English*

Suite #2, "Sarabande"

from *French Suite #1*, "Prelude in D Minor"

from *Nine Little Preludes*, "Contrapunctus #9"

from *The Art of the Fugue*

by Johann Sebastian

Bach; "Overture" from

Tristan und Isolde by

Richard Wagner,

performed by The NBC

Philharmonic

Orchestra; "Allegro"

from *Sonata #13*, "A

Variation" from

32 Variations in C Minor, "Allegretto" from

Sonata #17 (The Tempest)

by Ludwig van

Beethoven; "Opus #1"

by Glenn Gould;

"Adagio" from *Sonata in*

B Minor Op. 5 by Richard

Strauss; "Downtown"

by Tony Hatch,

performed by Petula

Clark; "Andantino"

from *Sonatina #2* by

Jean Sibelius;

"Precipitato" from

Sonata #7 by Sergei

Prokofiev; "Desir" from

Two Pieces Op.57 by

Alexander Scriabin;

"Sehr Lebhaft" from

Sonata #3, "Ruhig

Bewegte Viertel" from

Sonata #1 by Paul

Hindemith; "Gigue"

from *Suite for Piano*

Op.25, "Leich Zart"

from *Six Little Pieces for*

Piano by Arnold

Schoenberg

Location Sound

Stuart French

2nd Unit Montreal:

Daniel Masse

2nd Unit Europe:

Gérard Daquay

Sound Editors

Jane Tattersall

John D. Smith

Foley Recordist

Louis Hone

Re-recordist

Shelley Craig

Foley Artist

Andy Malcolm

Cast

Colm Feore

Glenn Gould

Derek Keurvorst

Gould's Father

Katya Ladan

Gould's Mother

Devon Anderson

Glenn age 3

Joshua Greenblatt

Glenn age 8

Sean Ryan

Glenn age 12

Kate Hennig

Chambermaid

Sean Doyle

Porter

Sharon Bernbaum

Female Guide

Don McKellar

Concert Promoter

David Hughes

Stagehand

Carlo D. Rota

CBS Producer

Peter Millard

CBS Engineer

John Dolan

CBS Assistant Engineer

Allegra Fulton

Waitress

Dick Callahan

Guy Thauvette

R.D. Reid

Conrad Bergschneider

Truckers

Gerry Quigley

Music Critic

Gale Garnett

Journalist

David Young

Writer

James Kidnie

Photographer

Maia Filat

Girl

Marina Anderson

Mother

Marie Josée Gauthier

Professor

Nick McKinney

Interpreter

Moynan King

Questioning Woman

Knowlton Nash

V.O. Announcer

Michael Kopsa

Len Doncheff

Brokers

Ian D. Clark

Phillip Brennan

David Clement

Desmond

Jimmy Loftus

Frank Canino

Waiters

Bruno Monsaingeon

Sir Yehudi Menuhin

Margaret Pasco

Jessie Greig

Interviewees

Megan Smith

Walter Homburger

Ray Roberts

Bob Phillips

Jill R. Cobb

Bob Sylveman

Elyse Mach

Mario Prizak

Valerie Verity

Vern Edquist

Interviewees in

'Crossed Paths'

8,378 feet

93 minutes

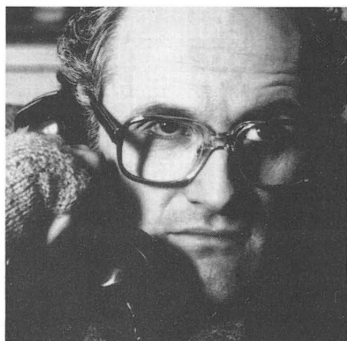
Dolby stereo

In colour

Part subtitled

gave; it also includes interviews with friends, relatives, colleagues and acquaintances from Yehudi Menuhin to Megan Smith, a chambermaid.

From the Canada of the 50s arrived a young pianist of startling talent, who was also that rarest of monsters in music performance, classical or otherwise - the unsentimental intellectual



Scale model: Colm Feore

◀ hummed while playing, the way he dressed – were always carefully pulled out of context by critics, in order to amuse and thus to discredit. The mind behind them – to a British 'serious' music public profoundly suspicious of mind – was not to be engaged with.

This was a man – Malcolm McLaren and John Lydon in one well-spoken virtuosic body – with outrageously aggressive attitudes, theoretically backed up, towards the canon. He hated Mozart, for example, while some of his interpretations of standard repertoire drew furious criticism. He took the line that with ever more conventional versions available, it was his duty to find other ways to express a composer's ideas; to challenge casual routine.

The film also omits portrayal of Gould's polite but firm tantrums over bad pianos, bad acoustics, bad audiences. His obsession with Petula Clark was wide-eyed fan-boy stuff, but bolstered by his fascination by the tricks of studio technology, which were only permitted on the other side of the tracks. This obsession is coded in the film's truck-stop scene as background music, and calmly over-ridden when the idea for one of his polyphonic radio compositions for voice comes to him: the important edges out the trivial, but such judgements are the filmmaker's, not Gould's. The saintly Yehudi Menuhin is interviewed, rebutting the Gould thesis, questioning the idea that 'morality' came into it. He all but calls it a big fuss over nothing; "things aren't perfect – but that's life," is his mild, wounding reproof.

Gould's point was that classicism's conventions are defended in the name of a Platonic perfection that they have usually been instrumental in bartering away; he countered them by ferocious application to the Platonic. He refused to put up with boredom and discomforts to mollify a genteel know-nothingism he thought barbaric. *Thirty Two Short Films* flourishes its episodic nature, and makes it work, charmingly enough. But out of respect for the music – rare enough, to be sure – Girard has picked a form which sells Gould's deepest philosophies short. The irony is that to pass on the true, paradoxical force of Gould's ideas, a film with more single-minded narrative flow is probably needed. That might be a better way to encapsulate the iconoclast who can say, so guilelessly, halfway through this film, "I just don't like the sound of pianos that much."

Mark Sinker

TV FILMS

Ethan Frome

USA 1992

Director: John Madden

Distributor

BBC TV

Production Company

Companion Productions Inc
In association with American Playhouse
Theatrical Films/
Richard Price/BBC Films

Executive Producers

Lindsay Law
Richard Price

Producer

Stan Wlodkowski

Associate Producer

Johlyn Dale

Production Office

Co-ordinator
Tiffany Rosen

Unit Production Manager

Charles Darby

Location Manager

Margot Bridger

Post-production

Supervisor
Johlyn Dale

Casting

Billy Hopkins

Suzanne Smith

Vermont:
Bess O'Brien

Jay Craven

New York Associate:
Ann Goulder

Los Angeles Associate:
Kerry Barden

Assistant Directors

Allan Nicholls

Dan Nalepka

Screenplay

Richard Nelson

Based on the novel
by Edith Wharton

Script Supervisor

Rebecca Long

Director of Photography

Bobby Bukowski

Additional Photography

Joseph Celeste

Daniel Shulman

Editor

Katherine Wenning

Production Designer

Andrew Jackness

Art Director

David Crank

Art Department

Trish Hofmann

Set Decorator

Joyce Anne Gilstrap

Set Dressers

William Bonn

Robert L. Bartell

Jim Russell

Timothy Moulton

On set:
Catie Dehaan

Snow Effects

Wayne Walser

Costume Design

Carol Oditz

Wardrobe Supervisor

Ellen Ryba

Key Make-up

Kathryn Bihr

Key Hair

Theo Mayes

Main Title Design

Penny Madden

Titles/Opticals

Ray Short

The Optical Partnership

Music
Rachel Portman

Music Conductor

David Snell

Music Performed by

Dance Musicians:

Emerson Lang

Harold Luce

Tony Washburn

Choreography

Patty Smith

Chip Hedler

Supervising Sound Editor

Campbell Askew

Dialogue Editor

Robert Gavin

Sound Mixer

Paul Cote

Re-recording Mixer

Paul Carr

Effects Editor

William Trent

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jerry Hewitt

Cast

Liam Neeson

Ethan Frome

Patricia Arquette

Mattie Silver

Joan Allen

Zeena

Tate Donovan

Reverend Smith

Katherine Houghton

Ruth Hale

Stephen Mendillo

Ned Hale

Deborah Ayer

Young Ruth

Jay Goede

Denis Eady

Rob Campbell

Young Ned

George Woodard

Jotham

Gil Rodd

Conductor

Phil Garra

Mr Howe

Virginia Smith

Mrs Howe

Annie Nessen

Sarah Anne Howe

Margie Vaughn

Young Woman

Burt Porter

Harmon Gow

Rusty De Wees

Paul Donlon

Men at Post Office

Robert Nutt

Church Elder

David Dellinger

Funeral Minister

W. Clark Noyes

Howard Boardman

Men at Funeral

Deborah Bremer

Woman at Funeral

Tom Todd

2nd Conductor

Louise De Gormier

Mrs Varnum

Edsel Hughes

Mr Varnum

Dennis Mientka

Andrew Hale

Darri Johnson

Customer at Eady Store

Patty Smith

Mrs Homan

8,995 feet

(at 25 fps)

93 minutes

Original Running Time:

99 mins

Dolby stereo

In colour

Winter. Reverend Smith arrives from Boston to take up his new position in the small Massachusetts town of Starkfield. On his way from the station, he passes a crippled man,

Ethan Frome. The backwater farming community is reluctant to talk about Ethan and his wife Zeena, and after his first sermon, the disillusioned clergyman is on the point of packing his bags. To prevent him from leaving, Ruth Hale takes him to the Frome household and on the way recounts Ethan's story... Ethan lives with his ailing mother and a distant cousin, Zeena, who looks after her. After his mother's death, Ethan and Zeena marry. But it is a loveless marriage, and Ethan, relinquishing his plans to study engineering, resigns himself to life looking after Zeena.

Zeena takes in an orphaned relative, young Mattie Silver, to help her. When the increasingly hypochondriac Zeena visits a specialist in a nearby town, Mattie and Ethan are left alone in the house overnight; they become lovers. Their joy turns to despair when Zeena returns home unexpectedly early. Sensing something, Zeena hires a girl to replace Mattie, insisting that she leave the next day. That night, Ethan goes to Mattie's room. The next day, Ethan drives Mattie to the station, buying her a keepsake hairpin on the way. As a final gesture, the two go tobogganing. Their sledge hits a tree, leaving both of them lying motionless in the snow... Ruth and Reverend Smith arrive at Ethan's house. Ruth asks to see Zeena, and they are ushered in to find a woman lying in bed. Smith is astonished to discover that this is Mattie, attended by a frail but able-bodied Zeena.

In the other recent Edith Wharton adaptation, *The Age of Innocence*, fate and society conspire to prevent Countess Olenska and Newland Archer from consummating their relationship. *Ethan Frome* suggests that if the would-be lovers had actually met, the outcome would have been disastrous. The deformed, asymmetric figure of the older Ethan testifies to the perils of transgression in the conformist society of early twentieth-century East coast America. His tortured, debilitated frame lumbering across the snow is a grim symbol of guilt, repression and unvoiced pain.

We are offered no hope of enduring happiness – we know how Ethan ends up, so even the flashbacks are overshadowed by tragedy. Paradoxically, it's rather a relief to escape the restrained bonhomie of the early scenes, in which the congregation diverts Smith's concern for Ethan and poverty by plying him with tea and presenting him with a gaggle of marriageable girls. By contrast, the flashback is something of a liberation. Ethan's emerging love for Mattie is lovingly and lingeringly charted – as when he peeks in at her dancing with a luckless suitor and quietly turns away in bemused jealousy.

The film hinges, inevitably, on a disproportionately long sequence when Zeena is away visiting her doctor, the only night that Ethan and Mattie spend alone. Oddly, the moment of recognition and fulfilment – when Mattie's bedroom door creeps open and Ethan enters to kiss her – is an anti-climax, cut abruptly away from the jolity of the following day. Up to this point, the suppressed attraction between the two has been expressed through a series of veiled mundanities – Ethan complimenting Mattie on her cooking, Mattie crying over a smashed dish. As if playing at being husband and wife, Ethan lights an after-dinner pipe while Mattie takes up her sewing. The scene is both poignant and faintly ridiculous.

This use of small gestures to convey large emotions is ultimately inadequate for getting across the intensity of the characters' feelings – but perhaps this is the point. After all, Ethan and Mattie snatch only a few hours of intimacy before Zeena returns. *Ethan Frome* is a bleak story, its pessimism not alleviated by the relentless pace of the adaptation. The acting, editing and camerawork follow in the same resigned footsteps towards the catastrophic denouement.

In order for the audience to feel loss, there needs to be a more positive and engaging sense of what might have been than is offered here. *Ethan Frome* doggedly suggests that it could not be any other way, closing with Ethan dragging his useless leg behind him like a burden. This is the nemesis meted out to those who seize the day and live to face the consequences: no cathartic release, just drudgery and memories of the past.

Stella Bruzzi

Hope in the Year Two

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Elijah Moshinsky

Distributor

BBC TV

Production Company

BBC Scotland

For Screen Two

Executive Producer

Bill Bryden

Producer

Ann Scott

Production Associate

Maryann Wilson

Production Manager

Jill Welsh

Location Manager

Kate Ledger

Screenplay

Trevor Griffiths

Director of Photography

Ivan Strasberg

Graphic Design

Susan Leitch

Film Editor

Ken Pearce

Production Designer

Hayden Griffin

Music

Carl Davis

Costumes

Sands Films

Make-up Design

Elizabeth Armstrong

Dubbing Editor

Jane Greenwood

Sound Recordist

Peter Brill

Dubbing Mixer

Aad Wirtz

Cast

Jack Shepherd

Prisoner

Tom Bowles

Henry

Sophie Linfield

Julie

7,994 feet

(at 25 fps)

70 minutes

In colour

Paris, April 1794. In the Luxembourg prison, the Revolutionary hero Danton is being held awaiting his execution. The Committee that imprisoned him, fearful of his popular support and thinking he may be rescued, imprisons a decoy to confuse any such attempts. Throughout his imprisonment, Danton attempts to persuade Henry, his jailer, that he is in fact the decoy, a harmless but wealthy lunatic.

He bribes him to take a letter hidden in the barrel of his musket beyond the prison walls. Henry, illiterate and convinced by the prisoner that the letter is addressed to his wife, agrees.

While Henry is away on his mission, Danton remembers his revolutionary past and its characters, including Robespierre and Marat. On Henry's return, he is informed that he got the letter to the gate-keeper and that it was awaiting someone to carry it to its destination. They play games to pass the time; Henry tells the prisoner he witnessed someone impersonating Danton and that his gestures and intonation were reminiscent of his own.

Horried by the jailer's suspicions, Danton attempts to cajole Henry into believing him, and believes he has succeeded. Henry trims Danton's hair prior to his execution. Alone in the cell, Henry extracts the letter from his gun and lights his pipe with it.

In *Citizens*, his magisterial account of the French Revolution, Simon Schama wrote of the revolutionary personality that "many, if not most, public men see their conduct as in part situated between the models from an heroic past and expectations of the judgement of posterity." In *Hope in the Year Two*, it is between two such moments and models of self-definition that Trevor Griffiths hangs the action and suspends his central protagonist. His Danton is figured as a man dangling between his glorious revolutionary past and his (non-) future as a casualty of "the national razor", as the guillotine was nicknamed with ghoul-ish affection.

In writing the piece to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of Danton's death, Griffiths has clearly understood that the moment between the thought and the deed, the decision and the action, is the perfect *temps mort* – dead time – to enliven with abstract speculation about revolutionary identity. But unlike André Malraux in *La Condition humaine*, Sartre in *Les Mains sales* and Camus in *Les Justes*, notable literary precursors in using this narrative stratagem, Griffiths opts to depict his revolutionary agonisingly on the receiving end of, and literally imprisoned by, the decisions of others.

The claustrophobia of the Luxembourg prison, the *huis clos* of the "Terror", makes Jack Shepherd's interpretation of Danton essentially a monologue dressed up in scrupulous BBC period detail. This Danton alternates between a rheumy-eyed nostalgia for his revolutionary heyday, panic fear at the prospect of the guillotine's "hot hand" at his neck, and flaccidly virile tub-thumping. So we get careful close-ups of the odd currency of the time – tin *sous* the size of crisps – and Henry, Danton's jailer and confidant/confessor, lovingly smoking a long, thin-stemmed pipe. Elijah Moshinsky's direction works to give a nice sense of the prison's space, aided by golden splinters of backlit daylight that filter through barricaded windows to pick out the room with lattices of light and

shade, matching the grids of the iron cage holding Danton. The film also uses a combination of camera movements that alternate between suspicious, gliding circuits of the cage and handheld tremors as the prisoner slams himself against its bars. The somewhat theatrical *mise en scène* does not detract from the central themes of the piece – identity and its fabrication, the image and the reality of revolution, and the idea of power as a nearly elemental quality that erodes those who wield it as thoroughly as those on whom it is exercised.

Danton's concern with his self-image as an architect of the Revolution and robust hero of the people recurs as a complicated masquerade. A cruel game of 'famous last words' played with the jailer becomes a careful planning of the right phrase, the accurate gesture, to be delivered at the tumbrils, the expression of a concern with theatricalizing the public self and thereby publicising the self beyond the grave. This theme dominates *Hope in the Year Two*, and finds one of its most interesting, but awkwardly handled moments in the 'deconstructive' reading of Jacques-Louis David's celebrated 1793 painting of the dead Marat. The painting itself is staged as a rather embarrassingly cod-Brechtian tableau, with Marat (played by Danton himself) sitting up in his tub to converse. Later, the extraordinary facts are recounted about David's perfidious manipulation of reality for the purpose of idealising Marat as a Christ-like martyr; they are placed at just the right chilling moment in the screenplay.

Despite its being slightly stagey and over-stylised, the writing and the performances – Tom Bowles's maddeningly obdurate jailer the seemingly dumb foil to Shepherd's vitality – carry *Hope in the Year Two*. Griffiths even manages a veiled gag about there being nothing new under the revolutionary sun when Danton laments having to call four valets "house assistants" "in this period of political correctitude".

Chris Darke

Return to Blood River

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Jane Howell

Distributor
BBC TV
Production Company
BBC
For Screen Two
Executive Producer
George Faber
Producer
Peter Goodchild
Associate Producer
Tony Redston
Production Executive
Ann Faggetter
Production Manager
Diana Barton
Location Manager
Andy Jackson
Casting Adviser
Ann Fielden
Screenplay
Douglas Livingstone
Script Editor
Andrew Clifford

Director of Photography
Dave Bowden
Graphic Design
Iain Macdonald
Editor
St. John O'Rourke
Production Designer
Oliver Bayldon
Costume Design
Les Lansdown
Make-up Design
Christine Walmesley
Cotham
Sound Supervisor
Alan Machin
Sound Dubbing
Brian Clark

Cast
Kevin McNally
Terry
Samantha Bond
Sally
Frances Barber
Karen
Warren Clarke
Hannes
Barbara Jefford
Else
Tony Armatrading
Daniel
Brian Capron
Phil
Susie Blake
Sonia
Josette Bushell-Mingo
Rachel
Natasha Williams
Rosie

Ilario Bisi-Pedro
Security Guard
Christopher Wells
Passport Control
Officer
Ian Pike
Policeman
Stephen Thorne
Vicar
Daniel Gregory
Adam
Lysia Gregory
Tina
John Channell Mills
George Bicknall

7,000 feet
(at 25 fps)
75 minutes

In colour

July, 1993. After 18 years in England, Terry Bucknall returns to his native Johannesburg to attend the funeral of his father George, a politically liberal white businessman gunned down by a mugger. Terry, accompanied by his English girlfriend Sally, is greeted with strained cordiality by his adopted sister Karen and her Afrikaans husband Johannes. His mother Else, however, remains cold and aloof. At the funeral reception Terry meets Daniel, a black comrade-in-arms from his activist youth. Daniel, given a job by George Bucknall after getting out of jail, now sits on the company board as a worker-director – to the resentment of Johannes and his fellow-director Phil, a British South African.

At dinner Johannes lectures Sally on Afrikaaner history. He also tells Terry, who has inherited George's controlling share of the family business, that Daniel must be sacked. The next day he and Phil reveal the reason: money has been siphoned off into a bogus company, and Daniel is suspected. Terry refuses to believe them and visits Daniel at home. Daniel denies the charge, accusing Terry of trying to save his conscience. Else still keeps Terry at arm's length, but alone with Sally bitterly recalls how her Afrikaaner family rejected her for marrying George.

When Terry insists on Daniel's innocence, Johannes produces clinching evidence: a signed confession from Daniel's accomplice. Terry once more confronts Daniel, who contemptuously admits his guilt, adding that he got the idea from seeing George fiddling the company's accounts. As Terry turns angrily to go, the police, sent by Else, burst in and shoot Daniel dead. After the funeral Terry hands over his company shares to Karen and prepares to return to London with Sally. But the last moment he decides to stay, leaving Sally to fly home alone.

"Those were the simple old days," former black activist Daniel tells his former white activist friend, "when everything was Cowboys and Indians." A moment later, white police burst in and gun him down, unarmed, in front of his wife and children. An indication that the old brutal simplicities still hold good, despite Daniel's words; or that things are indeed much more complex than the

expatriate white liberal would like to think? Either interpretation seems feasible – and the same goes for much else in *Return to Blood River*, a troubled, well-meaning drama that never quite gets a firm grip on its political perspective.

The fears and fissions of late-colonial societies evidently fascinate Douglas Livingstone, whose previous television work includes *We'll Support You Ever More* (Northern Ireland) and *Drums Along Balmoral Drive* (Rhodesia/Zimbabwe). In *We'll Support You Ever More*, the father of an English soldier killed in the province strives to make sense of its tribal enmities, and *Blood River* similarly reflects South Africa through bewildered outsider eyes – those of the exiled Anglicised Terry and his English girlfriend Sally. Both are shown up as naive and simplistic: Terry insisting that because Daniel is black and his accusers are racists, he must by definition be innocent; and Sally, in a woefully misjudged impulse of kindness, invading the decrepit hut occupied by the family servant Rosie and reducing her to a state of mute dismay.

But if things aren't nearly as straightforward as they seem from smug little England, in trying to present a more complex picture *Blood River* falls into over-simplifications of its own. The characters come across as walking mouthpieces for their various racial and political standpoints – especially Johannes, representative of reactionary Boerdom dragged snarling and shuddering into a multi-racial future, who's given to spouting great undigested chunks of South African history complete with statistics ("Do you know that 26,000 of our women and children died in British concentration camps?"). Here as elsewhere, Livingstone seems unwilling to trust his audience, ramming every point relentlessly home. When Terry describes his family's neighbourhood as "A suburb – expensive, tree-lined, white," Sally responds, wide-eyed, "And no black people live there at all?" At times the exposition plumbs depths of triteness that would put most soaps to shame. "I know Terry's his son, but you're his daughter and Johannes is his son-in-law," explains one character helpfully.

This degree of banality, coupled with the London-studio-bound production (most scenes are interiors, with the real South Africa featuring only as riot footage on television), makes it hard to engage with the characters, or to respond to the subject with the intensity it deserves. The irruption of the police, just after Daniel has goaded Terry into calling him a "black bastard", feels like a melodramatic contrivance – as does Terry's last-minute change of heart in the very car-park where his father was killed, the chalk outline of the body still visible on the asphalt. This is clearly meant as a final note of hope, a gesture of faith in the new South Africa. Instead it plays as the self-indulgent whim of a weak and indecisive man. It's hard to believe that when the going gets tough, Terry won't be on the next plane out.

Philip Kemp

Mark Kermode and Peter Dean highlight their ten video choices of the month, and overleaf review, respectively, the rest of the rental and retail releases

VIDEO CHOICE



Lost soul: Leslie Cheung in 'Farewell My Concubine'

Farewell My Concubine (Ba Wang Bie Ji)

Director Chen Kaige/Hong Kong/China 1993

If there is one film which deserves the critical plaudits it has received this year, it is Chen's big-budget studio departure. Chen uses the Peking Opera as a backdrop to explore politico-cultural change in China over the past 50 years and, in particular, its effect on two of the company's (fictional) stars, Dieyi (Leslie Cheung) and Xiaolou (Zhang Fengyi). Dieyi, sent to the Peking Opera Academy by his prostitute mother in 1925 and relentlessly brutalised there, survives through his ability to play female roles and – in what becomes the central theme of the film – his lifelong friendship with the tougher Xiaolou.

The pair achieve stardom in a tragic opera about a royal concubine – the story of which begins to reflect on their own lives. The final act is less successful (especially considering its historical scope and the small amount of time allocated to it) than the earlier scenes observing the actors' rise to fame. The sexual politics are also questionable, with the gay friendship between the two protagonists played down in the transition from novel to screen. But these are minor criticisms and, quite apart from the magnificent performances and direction, Chen convincingly conveys the attraction of Chinese opera.

(S&S January 1994)

● Retail: Artificial Eye ART 092; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 15

The Music of Chance

Director Philip Haas/USA 1993

An enticing noir pastiche, economically adapted by director Haas from Paul Auster's enigmatic novel. An ex-fireman



Life's gamble: 'The Music of Chance'

(Mandy Patinkin), recently deserted by his wife, picks up a ragged pokerplayer (James Spader) while aimlessly cruising the country. Lured into financing a high-stakes game, Patinkin pairs up with Spader and ends up paying off a bizarre debt to a pair of wealthy brothers (Charles Durning and Joel Grey). Excellently performed by its leading players (particularly M. Emmet Walsh as the millionaires' doleful gofer) this low-key ensemble piece is heavy with mystery and intrigue. Comparisons with David Mamet's *House of Cards* are inevitable and not entirely misplaced, although this is less glibly neat than Mamet's film. A gem.

(S&S April 1994)

● Rental: Columbia TriStar CVT 19927; Certificate 15

And the Band Played On

Director Roger Spottiswoode/USA 1993

Although temporarily taken out of Spottiswoode's control by financiers HBO, thankfully this made-for-TV thriller was eventually returned to the director. The result is a gripping medical whodunnit (based on Randy Shilts' riveting book) which blames the early spread of Aids on the money-grabbing blood industry and the homophobic Reagan administration. Matthew Modine is engaging as the idealistic doctor whose tracking of the HIV virus leads him away from medical research into the political arena. A plethora of Hollywood big names pop up in supporting cameos – most notably Richard Gere, who bravely portrays a gay choreographer dying of Aids. Unfairly lambasted on its UK theatrical release, this is unmissable. (S&S April 1994)

● Rental: ITC 0101; Certificate 15



Discovering the truth: Matthew Modine (right) in 'And the Band Played On'

Shoot the Pianist (Tirez sur le pianiste)

Director François Truffaut/France 1960

This quirky mix of homage, pastiche and Truffaut's own style is an absolute treat. After his wife's suicide, Armenian concert pianist Edouard Saroyan (Charles Aznavour) rejects fame and fortune. Changing his name to Charlie, he works as a dance hall pianist at night. When his criminal brother Chico visits, followed by two hitmen, Charlie and his new love (Marie Dubois) are kidnapped, setting in motion a series of tragic events. The chase sequences are reminiscent of Hitchcock's John Buchan period, while the latter part of the film is influenced by Hawks and Walsh. But Truffaut's bold use of fades, wipes, extreme close-ups, montage and music steers the movie into new territory, challenging the boundaries of mainstream narrative



Shifting identities: 'Shoot the Pianist'

cinema. Aznavour is central to the film's success, and the subtext about serious versus light music is one of many in-jokes about the Armenian-born singer's off-screen persona. Truffaut described the film as "A *mélange* in which no reality exists", but the romantic world it creates is far more than just the sum of its parts. (MFB No. 324)

● Retail: Artificial Eye ART 073; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; B/W; Certificate 15

Hard Target

Director John Woo/USA 1993

Having become Hong Kong's most internationally saleable director, action maestro John Woo moved to Hollywood to make *Hard Target*, his first English-language movie. Essentially a reworking of *The Most Dangerous Game*, *Hard Target* has Jean-Claude Van Damme infiltrating an elite hunting party who use humans as prey. Lance Henriksen excels as the psychotic businessman behind the fiendish organisation, while Van Damme spoils his reliable muscular performance by sporting risible hair extensions. Woo holds everything together admirably, choreographing staggering action set-pieces and, for the first time, using Western narrative conventions of pace and plot. Creative differences between Woo, his producers and his star Van Damme (who supervised post-production) were reported, but the director's personal stamp remains. (S&S November 1993)

● Rental: CIC VHR 1674; Certificate 18



Jean-Claude Van Damme: 'Hard Target'

Ghost in the Machine

Director Rachel Talalay/USA 1993

Freddy's Dead director Talalay injects visual panache and pacy tension into this otherwise unremarkable *Shocker*/Lawnmower Man copy. Dying serial killer Karl Hochman's soul is transferred into various electrical appliances after he receives a body-scan during a lightning storm. Karen Allen and her precocious son become



Classic Chaplin

The Chaplin Early Years Collection

Tillie's Punctured Romance/The Essanay Films Vols 1-3/The Mutual Films Vols 1-3

Directors Various/Charles Chaplin/USA 1914-1917

Although by no means a complete collection and, curiously, not released chronologically, PolyGram's seven-volume selection of early Chaplin films is the most extensive available on video. Wherever possible restoration and digitalisation have been carried out, and in the case of the influential *Tillie's Punctured Romance*, this is the most complete version. Arguably, *The Champion*, *The Tramp* and *A Woman* (with Chaplin in drag) are the highlights of the Essanay films; *The Floorwalker*, *The Pawnshop* and *The Immigrant* are the best of the Mutuals, most of which demonstrate great comic sophistication. In 1916, Chaplin left Essanay for Mutual, where he had total artistic control and began his 32-year collaboration with cameraman Rollie Tothoroh. It was the Mutual films with which Chaplin was most happy, and they still stand out.

● Retail: PolyGram 6300063/0873623/0873583/0873503/0874913/0877183/0873543; Price £10.99 each; Silent; B/W; Certificate U

disturbed after their acquaintances start meeting weird electro-deaths. The story is silly, but Talalay makes fine use of the scenario, in which the killer is tracked through cables and plugs to microwaves, computers and waste-disposal units. This augurs well for her new film *Tank Girl*.

● Rental: FoxVideo 8589; 92 minutes; Certificate 18; Producer Paul Schiff; Screenplay William Davies, William Osborne; Lead Actors Karen Allen, Chris Mulkey, Ted Marcoux



Electric shock: 'Ghost in the Machine'

Hamlet

Director Celestino Coronado/UK 1976

Apparently, it was the maltreatment of the negative during the original processing which gives this 65-minute version of Shakespeare's play its extraordinary luminosity of image. Shot on video and transferred to film, the film-makers had only 24 hours before its premiere at the 1976 London Film Festival in which to reverse the technical mistake and, finally, they had to live with the unexpected results. Coronado's

master-stroke is having Hamlet's self-doubt realised through a split personality, portrayed by twins Anthony and David Meyer. Helen Mirren doubles as Gertrude and Ophelia, Barry Stanton makes a fine Claudius and Quentin Crisp is Polonius. The director's treatment of the work is original and brave, and it is remarkable how the limitations of the minimal budget are overcome. Shocking, bewildering and highly memorable. (MFB No. 529)

● Retail: Dangerous to Know DTK 015; Price £10.99; Certificate 15



Mother and daughter: Helen Mirren in 'Hamlet'

Demolition Man

Director Marco Brambilla/USA 1993

Wrongly dismissed in the US as a misguided action vehicle, this feisty futuristic romp features Sylvester Stallone in his wittiest role since *Rocky*. When cryogenically-frozen maniac Wesley Snipes wakes up in a politically correct future, only a similarly chilled cop (Stallone) can save the day. Despite the explosive high-voltage thrills, it is the sassy script which steals the show. The repressiveness of a PC society is beautifully depicted, replete with linguistic contortions, penalty points for swearing and aggression, and sex so safe it doesn't even involve bodies. (S&S December 1993)

● Rental: Warner VO 12985; Certificate TBC



Sylvester Stallone: 'Demolition Man'

The Killer (Diexue Shuang Xiong)

Director John Woo/Hong Kong 1989

Along with Jackie Chan fight sequences and Cynthia Rothrock, *The Killer* is one of the great delights of Hong Kong cinema. Chow Yun-Fat plays Jeff, an accomplished assassin who accidentally blinds nightclub singer Jennie (Sally Yeh) and decides to do one more hit to pay for her operation. A cop (Danny Lee) trailing Jeff recognises a link between himself and the assassin and comes to realise that they are ultimately opposite sides of the same coin. The set-pieces are inventive, suspenseful and tinged with humour, while the film has a strong dramatic construction sadly lacking in *Hard-Boiled*. Chow Yun-Fat delivers a towering performance and the violent climax, in which hundreds of Triad members are disposed of in a church full of doves and weeping icons, has to be seen to be believed. This is the first time a subtitled version has been available on retail video. There is a 28-minutes-longer version

available in Taiwan, eight minutes of which are included at the end of this box-set.

(MFB No. 680)

● Retail: Made in Hong Kong HK 002/002B (Box-set); Price £12.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 18



Hong Kong delight: 'The Killer'

Reviews in Monthly Film Bulletin and Sight and Sound are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

Addams Family Values

Director Barry Sonnenfeld; USA 1993; CIC Paramount VHB 2851; Certificate 15
This sequel is an improvement on the shambolic, episodic original and benefits from genuinely ghoulish humour. While evil kids Wednesday and Pugsley attempt to dispose of their baby brother, gold-digger Debbie Jellinsky (Joan Cusack) seduces the corpulent Uncle Fester. The finale, in which the Addams kids destroy a goodie-goodie summer camp and incite a nerd's revolution, is wonderful. Some of the music on this video version differs from that on the theatrical print. (S&S February 1994)

Bodies, Rest & Motion

Director Michael Steinberg; USA 1993; Electric Video EP 0058; Certificate 15
Taking its title from a physical law – 'a body will remain in a state of rest or motion unless acted on by an outside force' – this moody feature represents the acceptable face of American art-house film. Bridget Fonda is stranded in Arizona by her cynical, macho boyfriend Tim Roth and is seduced by a hippy (Eric Stoltz). Steinberg muses enticingly on the plight of the blank generation and the ensemble cast are a delight. (S&S February 1994)

Friends

Director Elaine Proctor; UK/France 1993; Tartan Video TVT 1136; Certificate 15
Worthy drama which never quite gets to grips with the complexities of its subject matter. In apartheid-stricken South Africa, three friends (a middle-class radical, an Afrikaans archaeologist and a schoolteacher) struggle to maintain links. But their ideological differences are exposed when one of them bombs the local airport, killing a black cleaning woman. (S&S January 1994)

Guilty as Sin

Director Sidney Lumet; USA 1993; Hollywood/Buena Vista 09220092; Certificate 15
Larry Cohen's pithy screenplay contains enough spicy substance to sustain an otherwise patchy production. Defence lawyer Rebecca De Mornay takes on the case of a womaniser (Don Johnson) accused of killing his wife. Johnson and De Mornay make the most of their roles, while Lumet recovers from *Close to Eden*. (S&S January 1994)

Malice

Director Harold Becker; USA 1993; PolyGram PG 1021; Certificate 15
A gripping thriller based on a laughable premise. Newlyweds Andy (Bill Pullman) and Tracy (Nicole Kidman) Safian's chances of having children are ruined when an eminent surgeon (Alec Baldwin) mistakenly removes Tracy's ovaries. Legal suits ensue, revealing unpleasant truths about the key players. Becker milks the



Keeping up appearances: Raul Julia and Christopher Lloyd in 'Addams Family Values'

tension, setting the final showdown in a cliff-top house battered by thunder and lightning. Not very subtle, but good fun. (S&S February 1994)

The Meteor Man

Director Robert Townsend; USA 1993; MGM/UA V053022; Certificate PG
Like Townsend's previous feature *The Five Heartbeats*, *Meteor Man* had a limited release. Yet this comedy, in which a mild-mannered black superhero cleans up the neighbourhood, is likeable and crammed with cameos (Bill Cosby, James Earl Jones, rappers Cypress Hill). Why hasn't Townsend received the recognition given to John Singleton and the Hughes Brothers? (S&S February 1994) □

My Life

Director Bruce Joel Rubin; USA 1993; Guild G8752; Certificate 15
After scripting *Jacob's Ladder* and *Ghost* Rubin returns for a third foray into the afterlife. Egotistical cancer patient Bob Jones (Michael Keaton) videotapes his collected thoughts for his unborn child. The buddhist philosophy and the hanky-drenching weepiness are awful, but Keaton's sprightly performance saves the day. (S&S April 1994)

A Perfect World

Director Clint Eastwood; USA 1993; Warner VO 12990; Certificate 15
The relationship between prison escapee Kevin Costner and his child hostage (T. J. Lowther), which is touching, tense and often comic, is the most gripping aspect of this film. Unfortunately, the other sequences in which a Texas ranger (Clint Eastwood) and his entourage squabble as they chase the pair are irrelevant and dull. (S&S February 1994) □

Robin Hood: Men in Tights

Director Mel Brooks; USA 1993; 20.20 Vision NVT 20363; Certificate PG
Unfunny spoof, two years too late to take pot-shots at the Costner/Bergin extravaganzas. Cary Elwes does his best to raise a laugh, but with gags such as 'The Sheriff of Nottingham', it's a losing battle. (S&S January 1994)

Son in Law

Director Steve Rash; USA 1993; Hollywood D941952; Certificate 15
A clumsy vehicle for unamusing MTV comedian Pauly Shore. Californian dude

Crawl (Shore) finds himself in a mid-west town where his manners clash with the local customs. (S&S March 1994)

Surf Ninjas

Director Neal Israel; USA 1993; EV VV 1270; Certificate PG
Innocuous children's film about three Californian brats discovering that they are the rightful heirs to the throne of a remote island. Leslie Nielsen lends support. (S&S April 1994)

Rental premiere

Amos & Andrew

Director E. Max Frye; USA 1993; PolyGram PG 1013; Certificate 15; 92 minutes; Producer Gary Goetzman; Screenplay E. Max Frye; Lead Actors Nicolas Cage, Samuel L. Jackson, Michael Lerner, Margaret Collin
Surprisingly dreary and contrived comedy which unsurprisingly flopped in the States. Successful black businessman Andrew Sterling (Jackson) purchases a house in an all-white area where he is mistaken for a burglar and shot at by the police. Convict Amos (Cage) is promptly dispatched to cover up the bungle.

Bopha

Director Morgan Freeman; USA 1993; CIC Paramount VHB 2844; Certificate 15; 113 minutes; Producer Lawrence Taubman; Screenplay Brian Bird, John Wierick; Lead Actors Danny Glover, Alfre Woodard, Malcolm McDowell
Solid, unremarkable South African-based drama with political aspirations. A black police sergeant (Glover), loyal to his white leaders, experiences a crisis in belief when political turmoil divides his family and his son becomes a radical. The cast is strong (particularly Woodard) and the direction, although lacking finesse, conveys a sense of historical momentum.

the cool surface

Director Erik Anjou; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVT 20733; Certificate 18; 84 minutes; Producer Stephen Bataillard; Screenplay Erik Anjou; Lead Actors Robert Patrick, Teri Hatcher, Mat McCoy, Ian Buchanan
An inventive erotic-thriller containing one good idea, one-and-a-half good performances and sax-wailing sex scenes inter-cut with hallucinatory violence.

An earnest writer on the rebound from a romantic tragedy is lured into a world of celluloid sleaze.

Father Hood

Director Darrell James Roodt; USA 1993; Hollywood D941912; Certificate PG; 91 minutes; Producers Nicolas Pileggi, Avant Singh, Gillian Gorfli; Screenplay Scott Spencer; Lead Actors Patrick Swayze, Halle Berry, Diane Ladd
A stateside theatrical flop in which Swayze moves away from his reliable action hero roles into less certain 'caring' territory. A small-time hood is reunited with his estranged children and takes them on a cross-country chase away from their foster homes.

Give Me a Break (US title: Life With Mikey)

Director James Lapine; USA 1993; Touchstone D320102; Certificate PG; 88 minutes; Producers Teri Schwartz, Scott Rudin; Screenplay Marc Lawrence; Lead Actors Michael J. Fox, Nathan Lane, Cyndi Lauper, Christina Vidal
Child star turned theatrical agent Michael Chapman (Fox) pins all his hopes of revitalising his flagging business on 11-year-old pickpocket Angie (Vidal). As usual, Fox is charming and exuberant, and his inability to throw off his baby-face image lends resonance to his performance. Lawrence's script is good on sassy one-liners, and Lapine admirably exploits the comic potential, particularly during the children's auditions sequences.

Hostage for a Day

Director John Candy; USA 1993; Guild G8748; Certificate 15; 86 minutes; Producer Adam Haight; Screenplay Kari Hildebrand, Robert Crane, Peter Torokvei; Lead Actors George Wendt, Peter Torokvei, Kathleen Laskey
Misleadingly packaged with a cover still of John Candy (who appears in a cameo), this oddity is a mixture of gentle melancholic humour, uneasy farce and intrusive fantasy. Henpecked husband Warren Kooley fakes his own kidnapping to facilitate an escape to Alaska. Although the plot is messy, there are some nice characterisations and incidental touches. This was Candy's only directorial effort.

Irresistible Force

Director Kevin Hooks; USA 1993; FoxVideo 8565; Certificate 15; 74 minutes; Producer Michael Lake; Screenplay Carleton Eastlake; Lead Actors Cynthia Rothrock, Stacy Keach, Christopher Neame
Tough police sergeant Harris Stone (Keach) winds up with Cynthia Rothrock after requesting a woman partner in the hope that she will be less aggressive than previous male accomplices. Rothrock adds unique zest, Keach, for once, doesn't ham it up, and the duo make an endearing double-act.

Linda

Director Nathaniel Gutman; USA 1993; CIC Paramount VHB 2850; Certificate 15; 85 minutes; Producer Bob Robe; Screenplay Nevin Schreiner; Lead Actors Virginia Madsen, Richard Thomas, Ted McGinley, Laura Harrington
TV adaptation of a novel by John D. MacDonald (of *Cape Fear* fame) in which two lovers plot to stitch up their respective partners. Madsen and Thomas carry the piece, while director Gutman injects a genuine sense of mystery and intrigue into the multi-layered deceptions.

PRIVATE VIEW

John Woo on tragic heroes and violence

Chinese poetry in motion

In the west, my film career began with *The Killer*. Although *A Better Tomorrow* (1986) was a huge success in Asia, it was largely ignored by western audiences. *The Killer* was shown at the 1989 Toronto Film Festival, where it received critical praise – I hadn't previously been to a film festival, and I was taken aback by how many fans I had. Later, in 1990 at the Cannes film festival, film-makers, producers and studios also expressed an interest in my film style and action techniques.

I started directing when I was 26. At the time, mainstream cinema in Hong Kong was dominated by kung fu films. In the 80s I made several comedies. I hated making commercial films – I wanted to make films that were true to myself, that showed my real character, but because the comedies made money the studios were against my experimenting. Directing became an increasingly painful experience for me. I wanted to break away and show something about society; I wanted to express my views on war, Vietnam, poverty, 1997, and so I tried, unsuccessfully, to put elements of these ideas into my comedy films. I was, and still am, inspired by European and American film-makers such as Kubrick, Leone, Fellini, Peckinpah, Coppola and Scorsese – and I knew that I wanted to make films like theirs. Then, with support from friends, I made the film that changed my life – *A Better Tomorrow* – and I was able to turn my back on the comedies at last.

In my films I explore themes and emotions common to everyone. Even though we all walk different paths – depending on culture and background – I believe there are some ideas that are universal. For example, we all want to believe there is justice, love, morality

and beauty in the world. These thoughts prompted me to make *The Killer*. A killer and a cop represent two extremely different worlds but inside they have common values of nobility and chivalry; on the surface they may be enemies but underneath they have a kind of mutual respect. I tried to convey that a 'good' person is often misunderstood by society; their idealism isolates them, as with the character of the killer in Melville's *Le Samourai*, who is a tragic hero, a lonely tiger.

I regard *The Killer* as a romantic poem. I admire the ancient Chinese knights, the loyalty of the samurai spirit and, in the west, the French Romantics. A true 'knight' should be free to come and go as he pleases – he has no need for recognition from those around him because his actions are the most important thing. He will often sacrifice everything, even his life, for justice, loyalty, love and his country and if he makes a promise to a friend he must keep it. His life is like a cloud – it could disappear in an instant, and I think this image of a man's fragility is beautiful. Even if there is only one beautiful moment in our life, it is worth living just for that.

I often feel that I have to hide the romantic side of my nature because people – even friends – would regard me with suspicion if I showed it. So I put all my romance in my films. I approach the process of film-making as if I were creating a poem or a painting. I think of how the poem will be written or the painting painted rather than what techniques to use. It is not the method that is important but the feeling and imagination that go into creating a film. How a story is told is vital and so I make

use of specific techniques to create the action sequences in my movies. Often these are based on how I am feeling at that moment. My films have a lot of action in them but I don't treat them as pure 'action movies' – I want my films to be something more than that. I direct action sequences in the same way that one would choreograph a musical, with every movement planned. I consider the violence in my movies to be cartoon-like. I certainly don't see it as real.

I hate violence. I was raised in the slums of Hong Kong where I saw too many people killed in disasters and by gangs. In the 50s and 60s during the riots in Hong Kong I witnessed people being killed by policemen outside my door. Growing up in the slums is like growing up in hell, and I always dreamt of a better world – a place where there is no violence. Unfortunately, the real world is not like my dreams – everywhere there is violence and crime – but what I show in my films is that violence can be defeated by justice. My heroes use their self-discipline to combat injustice; my characters obey a code of honour and loyalty – I want to show that life is precious. My archetypal hero is a chivalrous one, and this notion of nobility of the soul can be understood by Asian or western cultures. There is more to the human spirit than violence, there is goodness and loyalty.

I made *The Killer* as a homage to *Le Samourai*, but I also want to dedicate this film to Martin Scorsese, who has greatly influenced my style, and to Chow Yun-Fat and Danny Lee whom I consider to be modern 'knights', and finally, to those classic movies about tragic heroes. *'The Killer' is a Made in Hong Kong video release*

The Mummy Lives

Director Gerry O'Hara; USA 1993; Cannon VO 32121; Certificate TBC; 93 minutes; Producer Harry Alan Towers; Screenplay Nelson Gidding; Lead Actors Tony Curtis, Greg Wrangler, Leslie Hardy
Hilariously awful film featuring a side-splitting performance by Curtis as Lord Aziru, ancient philanderer and keeper of the dead. An abysmal script, *Star Trek*-style sets and fancy-dress costumes make this a hoot.

Praying With Anger

Director M. Night Shyamalan; USA 1993; Imagine IMAG 503; Certificate 15; 103 minutes; Producer/Screenplay M. Night Shyamalan; Lead Actors M. Night Shyamalan, Mike Muthu, Captain K. Subramanian, Arun Balachandran
Winner of the American Film Institute's debut film of the year award, this highly personal and sincere offering follows an Asian-American's return to India. Out of touch with his cultural roots, the aggressive Dev (Shyamalan) is isolated in his Indian school, except for the friendship of Sunjay and the enticing Sabitha. Impressively lensed by Madhu Ambat and packed with cultural detail.

Pure Country

Director Christopher Gain; USA 1992; Warner VO 12593; Certificate PG; 107 minutes; Producer Jerry Weintraub; Screenplay Rex McGee; Lead Actors George Strait, Lesley Ann Warren, Israel Glasser
Unashamed schmaltz. Country and Western star Strait pretty much plays himself in the role of good old boy Dusty who turns his back on touring and returns to his roots. Hardly radical, but the twanging guitars and Mom's apple-pie philosophy are delightful.

Tobe Hooper's Night Terrors

Director Tobe Hooper; USA 1993; Warner VO 32125; Certificate 18; 78 minutes; Producer Harry Alan Towers; Screenplay Daniel Matmor; Rom Globus; Lead Actors Robert Englund, Zoe Trilling, Will Finley
Hooper inherited this bilge from the Yoram Globus stable when the original director Gerry O'Hara died. The ragged script, originally envisaged as "A violent, scary, sexy, sado-masochistic *Dangerous Liaisons*", reveals the many rewrites and in-fights it went through. Zoe Trilling is brainwashed into joining a sex cult. Englund clearly enjoys playing both modern-day weirdo Chevalier and eighteenth-century De Sade. Original title: *Tobe Hooper's Nightmare*.

Retail

Les Biches

Director Claude Chabrol; France 1968; Art House AHO 6008; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15

A callous lesbian (played by the director's wife Stéphane Audran) picks up a young art student called Why and whisks her off to St Tropez for fun and games with the jet-set and a *ménage à trois* with an architect. The early moments of seduction have an electric charge, and the scenes of drunken revelry resemble some of the finer moments in *Accident*, but it is hard to see why this film revived Chabrol's reputation. (MFB No. 421)



Different lives, shared values: Chow Yun-Fat and Danny Lee in Woo's *'The Killer'*

Black Orpheus (Orfeu Negro)

Director Marcel Camus; France/Italy/Brazil 1959; Connoisseur Video CR 149; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate PG
Exhilarating, colourful and explosive transposition of the Orpheus myth on to the Rio carnival. Philandering tram conductor Orfeu travels to the underworld to save Eurydice from a mysterious stranger dressed as death. (MFB No. 318)

Body of Evidence

Director Uli Edel; USA 1992; Guild GLD 51482; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S May 1993)

The Captive Heart

Director Basil Dearden; UK 1946; Lumiere LUM 2116; Price £10.99; B/W; Certificate PG
Michael Redgrave, Jack Warner and Basil Radford head an all-British cast in an archetypal POW yarn. (MFB No. 148)

Cyborg Cop

Director Sam Firstenberg; USA 1993; Medusa MED 13262; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S Video June 1993)

Dead Reckoning

Director John Cromwell; USA 1946; Columbia TriStar CVR 20355; Price £10.99; B/W; Certificate U
Worthy film noir with Humphrey Bogart as an ex-paratrooper trying to get to the bottom of a friend's disappearance after the latter jumps train en route to being honoured by the war department. Elizabeth Scott is the vampish nightclub singer at the centre of the double-dealing. (MFB No. 159)

Dunkirk

Director Leslie Norman; UK 1958; MGM/UA SO 50362; Price £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG
Small-scale war drama detailing the build-up to an act of British bravery during the Second World War. Newsreel footage was incorporated into the fiction, which stars John Mills, Richard Attenborough and Bernard Lee giving their stiff-upper-lip best. This is the rarely seen original length version. (MFB No. 292)

Effi Briest (Fontane Effi Briest)

Director Rainer Werner Fassbinder; West Germany 1974; Connoisseur Video CR 156; Price £15.99; Subtitles; B/W; Certificate U
This glorious-looking version of Theodor Fontane's classic novel is one of Fassbinder's finest achievements. Hanna Schygulla plays 17-year-old Effi, who is forced to marry a man twice her age. (MFB No. 530)

Falling Down

Director Joel Schumacher; USA 1992; Warner SO 12648; Price £13.99; Certificate 18 (S&S June 1993) □

Le Feu follet

Director Louis Malle; France/Italy 1963; Electric Video EP 0055; Price £15.99; Subtitles; B/W; Certificate 15
Depressing drama, based on a novel by a French writer who committed suicide after collaborating with the Nazis, about an alcoholic writer who decides to kill himself, asking his friends for reasons not to do so. Maurice Ronet's superb performance rises above the morbidity of the subject matter. Aka *Will o' the Wisp/A Time to Live and a Time to Die/The Fire Within*. (MFB No. 367)



Cold love: Hanna Schygulla in 'Effi Briest'

A Flame in My Heart (Une Flamme dans mon coeur)

Director Alain Tanner; France/Switzerland 1987; Mainline Pictures MPV 008; Price £15.99; Subtitles; B/W; Certificate 18
Myriam Mézières co-wrote and takes the lead in this atmospheric, sexually-charged melodrama about an actress who is turned into a sex object. The film begins with Mercedes (Mézières) rehearsing for her new play while trying to rid herself of a former lover. The ex-lover's persistence starts Mercedes on a downward spiral from which she can't recover. It is a pity that this is sold as a sex film. (MFB No. 650)

Folks!

Director Ted Kotcheff; USA 1992; Missing in Action MIA V3401; Price £10.99; Certificate 15
In this slapstick movie, Tom Selleck puts up with unwelcome house guests. Anne Jackson and Don Ameche are his folks from hell. (S&S February 1993)

La Guerre est finie

Director Alain Resnais; France/Sweden 1966; Art House AHO 6021; Price £15.99; Subtitles; B/W; Certificate 15
Yves Montand plays an exiled Spanish revolutionary living in Paris who has to face up to the fact that his 25-year fight against Franco has been worthless. One of Resnais' most accessible works, with plenty to like but plenty to yawn at as well. (MFB No. 394)

Heatwave

Director Phillip Noyce; Australia 1981; Art House AHP 5010; Price £12.99; Certificate 15
Likeable and promising conspiracy thriller, made before Noyce's move to Hollywood. Judy Davis plays an idealistic liberal opposed to a proposed real-estate development that will leave people homeless. Davis' crusade leads to her involvement in a possible kidnap-murder and a love affair with the young architect of the housing project. (MFB No. 584)

Home at Seven

Director Ralph Richardson; UK 1952; Warner SO 38302; Price £10.99; B/W; Certificate U
Sir Ralph's sole attempt at directing

is the only noteworthy thing about this ridiculous and flat adaptation of R. C. Sherriff's play. Bank clerk David Preston leaves the bank on Monday and arrives home the following evening suffering from loss of memory – and possibly having been involved in a murder. Aka *Murder on Monday*. (MFB No. 218)

Jack the Bear

Director Marshall Herskovitz; USA 1992; FoxVideo 5597; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S March 1993)

Lamb

Director Colin Gregg; UK 1985; Channel Four Films VA 30405; Price £10.99; Certificate 15
A solid, early Liam Neeson role and a delightful cameo by Ian Bannen as the Father of a Catholic remand home lift this stark tale of a ten-year-old epileptic boy (Hugh O'Connor) who is bullied after being institutionalised. The uncompromising ending is upsetting. (MFB No. 629)

Lorenzo's Oil

Director George Miller; USA 1992; Universal VHR 1654; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S March 1993) □

Love Is a Many Splendored Thing

Director Henry King; USA 1955; FoxVideo 1039; Price £12.99; Certificate U
Cliché-ridden romance about ill-starred lovers from different worlds. Jennifer Jones plays a Eurasian doctor and William Holden a war journalist who meet in the Korean war conflict. The Hong Kong backdrop is used to good effect. (MFB No. 262)

Malcolm X

Director Spike Lee; USA 1992; Guild GLD 51502; Price £12.99; Certificate 15 (S&S March 1993)

The Marriage of Maria Braun (Die Ehe der Maria Braun)

Director Rainer Werner Fassbinder; West Germany 1978; Connoisseur Video CR 155; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
The first of Fassbinder's "Adenauer trilogy" – films scripted by Peter

Märthesheimer and Pea Fröhlich focusing on strong heroines during Germany's post-war reconstruction. Hanna Schygulla remains loyal to her soldier husband, who goes missing during the Second World War, despite her affair with a wealthy industrialist. (MFB No. 559)

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Director Celestino Coronado; UK 1984; Dangerous to Know DTK 014; Price £14.99; Certificate 15
Lindsay Kemp's stage troupe recreates its theatrical magic with help from Coronado's imaginative direction. The director takes liberties with Shakespeare's original text, using it sparingly and allowing the fantastical images, dance and music to do the work. Dazzling, magical and well worth viewing. (MFB No. 613)

Parting Glances

Director Bill Sherwood; USA 1986; Pride PRI 11018; Price £14.99; Certificate 15
A life-affirming look at gay lifestyles. Michael, a young editor, is set for some big changes in his life when his lover Robert is posted abroad for two years and his best friend is diagnosed as having Aids. (MFB No. 634)

Sexual Intent

Director Kurt MacCarley; USA 1992; Medusa MED 13212; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S Video May 1993)

Silver

Director Phillip Noyce; USA 1993; Paramount VHB 2782; Price £13.99; Certificate 18 (S&S September 1993)

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III

Director Stuart Gillard; USA 1992; FoxVideo 1999; Price £8.99; Certificate PG (S&S August 1993)

Le Testament d'Orphée ou ne me demandez pas pourquoi

Director Jean Cocteau; France 1960; Connoisseur Video CR 123; Price £15.99; Subtitles; B/W; Certificate PG
For his final film, Cocteau returned

WIND UP

By Peter Dean

● Following the unprecedented success of Labyrinth's *Police Stop!*, a compilation of police videos of car chases, accidents as they happen and reckless driving on motorways, we now have Lumiere's *Fire Rescue 999* and *Real Life Casualty*. Narrated by Glen Murphy from the TV series *London's Burning*, *Fire Rescue 999* shows "People trapped and crushed in twisted metal! ... air burning and crackling with deafening excitement!"

Real Life Casualty, which features film of "what the ambulance crew saw", is in even worse taste. The distributors' press announcement reads: "Police know that much of the traffic congestion that surrounds a road accident has nothing to do with the obstruction - it's caused by people slowing down, hoping for a glimpse of twisted metal, shattered glass, broken bones and gaping wounds. Small wonder that sixteen million people regularly settle down on their sofas to watch the BBC's constant stream of human pain and misery, brought to the screen using slick production values and brilliant make-up. But *Casualty* lacks one vital ingredient - reality... In *Real Life Casualty* the victims are not actors and the injuries are not the work of a make-up artist." One film producer is currently offering for sale the rights to a programme showing large-scale human tragedies - such as the suffering of victims of earthquakes and people jumping to their death from burning buildings.

Upping the ante, we now have Labyrinth's rush release *Police Stop America!* and Braveworld's *Police America - Real Stories of the Highway Patrol*, presented by Shaw Taylor of television's *Police 5*. Labyrinth, who also wanted to call their tape *Police America*, took out an injunction against Braveworld. They later had it lifted, but still intend to pursue the matter legally. The reason for all the fuss is revealed on Braveworld's sleeve: "Featuring high-speed car and motorcycle chases that could only happen in the US... Forget what you have seen in UK real-life police videos - for real excitement ride with the American Highway Patrol... Remember it is not unusual for the occupants of a car to be armed and very dangerous... Captured in this video is a police officer who is run down while conducting a routine vehicle search."

Ironically, none of these is seen as providing "an inappropriate role model

for children." The censoring bodies are so sure that these 'real-life' videos could never influence anyone to put a breeze block on a railway line, petrol through a letterbox or flee the cops and make an appearance in the next edition of *Police Stop!* that they are exempt from classification. At the time of going to press, the fictional violence in *True Romance*, *Dirty Weekend*, *Reservoir Dogs*, *Bad Lieutenant*, *Mike*, *Kickboxer* - *The Aggressor* and *Menace II Society* has prevented their video release.

● Another film that was temporarily pulled from video release in the post-Alton silly season is D.W. Griffith's 1915 silent classic 'The Birth of a Nation', considered by many to be a milestone in cinema history. Chief censor James Ferman decided the ending, in which the Ku Klux Klan rescues a white farm from attacking hordes of black slaves, could contravene the Race Relations Act. Distributors Connoisseur Video were asked by Ferman to insert a pre-title disclaimer explaining the racist ending. Having spent a small fortune on a West End production suite, Connoisseur were horrified when Ferman complained about the aesthetic quality of the graphics. Martin Nash, Connoisseur Video's chief, says the £2000 cost of this disclaimer could prohibit a profitable video release for 'The Birth of a Nation'.

● While the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) waits for clarification of its ratings procedure from the government, the video industry has just announced the inclusion of additional information on cassette sleeves about what the film contains and what the ratings mean. The thriller *Malice*, distributed by PolyGram, will be the first title to display an explanation of its contents detailing the amount of nudity, swearing and violence in the movie along with its 15 rating. The new sleeves mean that people will no longer be able to argue that they do not know what they are getting when they rent a video. The information will also be on the spine of the video so that it will be the last thing visible as the cassette is pushed into the machine. BBFC head James Ferman approves: "This will be very helpful to parents as it will alert them to themes such as drugs or prostitution that they might want to protect their children from. It will also help shopkeepers who are asked by customers about the suitability of films."

to the Orpheus legend he had explored ten years earlier in *Orphée*. Cocteau plays The Poet, and the dream-like imagery includes scenes that feature characters from his past films, as well as friends. The Poet can only achieve immortality by dying, being resurrected and dying again. (MFB No. 318)

Turkish Delight

Director Paul Verhoeven; Netherlands 1973; Missing in Action MIA V3404; Price £12.99; Certificate 18
Rutger Hauer, in an early role, made his name in the Netherlands with this contemporary love saga about a sculptor who marries a young woman from a bourgeois family. After the relationship fails, the man seduces as many women as he can to ease the heartache. The dubbing is poor. Aka *Turks Fruit*. (MFB No. 526)

The Wackiest Ship in the Army

Director Richard Murphy; USA 1960; Columbia TriStar CVR 11276; Price £10.99; Certificate PG
Pop star Ricky Nelson plays a first officer on a ship under Jack Lemmon's command on a top secret mission in the South Pacific. The film is played mainly for laughs, but dramatic moments are smoothly included. Lemmon's performance is just right. (MFB No. 325)

Zazie dans le métro

Director Louis Malle; France 1960; Electric Video EP 0054; Price £15.99; Subtitles: B/W; Certificate 15
Zazie (Catherine Demongeot) is a precocious, foul-mouthed ten-year-old who goes to stay with her female-impersonator uncle (Philippe Noiret) while her mother spends a few days with a new lover. Zazie wants to travel the métro, but when a strike prevents her she creates havoc in revenge. Brightly shot and full of cinematic tricks, but it soon grinds to a halt. (MFB No. 349)

Retail premiere

The Barefoot Kid

Director Johnny To; Hong Kong 1993; Made in Hong Kong HK 009; Price £12.99; Subtitles: Widescreen; Certificate 15; 87 minutes; Producer Mona Fung; Screenplay Unknown; Lead Actors Maggie Cheung, Aaron Kwok, Ti Lung
Awesome fighting scenes are the highlight of this action pic in which an illiterate peasant boy is brought up by his dead father's friend, a former hitman, and is taught the mysteries of kung fu. After the boy is cast aside by his female employer, who fears that his presence will inflame her aggressive rivals, he finds himself pitted against his former mentor.

God of Gamblers

Director Wong Jing; Hong Kong 1990; Made in Hong Kong HK 006; Price £12.99; Subtitles: Widescreen; Certificate 18; 120 minutes; Producer Charles Heung; Screenplay Wong Ching; Lead Actors Chow Yun-Fat, Andy Lau
Highly enjoyable thriller set around Hong Kong's casinos, which turns up trumps despite a tiresome second half in which wizard card player Chow Yun-Fat adopts the mind of a child after a freak accident. Embarrassing comedy is sandwiched between the action, and the



'God of Gamblers'

slapstick (not helped by poor subtitles) palls. However, Chow Yun-Fat's performance is exemplary, the action is great and the gambling scenes are crazy. Recommended.

Maya

Director Ketan Mehta; India 1992; Channel Four Films VA 30306; Price £10.99; Certificate 15; 122 minutes; Producer Ketan Mehta; Screenplay Sitanshu Yashashchandra, Ketan Mehta; Lead Actors Deepa Sahi, Farooque Shaikh, Raj Babbar
This Hindi version of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* caused controversy in India because it was the first Indian film in which a lead actress bares her breasts. A woman, trapped by her bourgeois lifestyle, seeks solace in her daydreams.

Saviour of the Soul

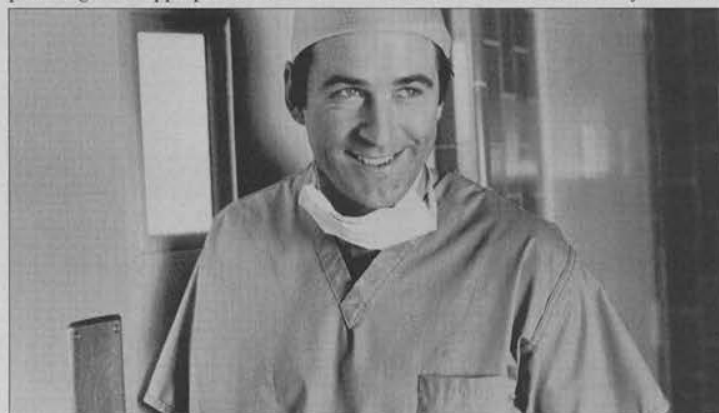
Director Corey Yuen; Hong Kong 1992; Made in Hong Kong HK 007; Price £12.99; Subtitles: Widescreen; Certificate 18; 89 minutes; Producer Andy Lau; Screenplay Kar-Wai Wong; Lead Actors Andy Lau, Anita Mui, Aaron Kwok
The *Water Margin* is crossed with *manga* and *Blade Runner* in this imaginative sci-fi action movie. In the twenty-first century two bounty hunters chase after a woman martial-artist whose sister is an ammunition expert. All the characters are hampered by the lunatic Silver Fox, a flying, supernatural warrior who turns his victims into mindless puppets. The opening and closing fight sequences are mind-boggling.

T-Bone 'n Weasel

Director Lewis Teague; USA 1992; ITC ITC9870; Price £10.99; Certificate PG; 93 minutes; Producers Mark Levinson, Scott Rosenfelt; Screenplay Jon Klein; Lead Actors Gregory Hines, Christopher Lloyd, Ned Beatty, Rip Torn
Amiable, aimless road movie with ex-con T-Bone setting out with misfit Weasel on the road to discover a new life.

Touche pas à la femme blanche

Director Marco Ferreri; France/Italy 1974; Art House AHO 6015; Price £15.99; Subtitles: Certificate 18; Producer Unknown; Screenplay Marco Ferreri; Lead Actors Marcello Mastroianni, Michel Piccoli, Ugo Tognazzi, Philippe Noiret, Catherine Deneuve
Ferreri's satire, if not always enjoyable, is certainly confrontational. For this curious, little seen swipe at the American west set in modern day Paris, he reassembles his *La Grande Bouffe* cast, including Mastroianni as General Custer, Piccoli as Buffalo Bill, and Deneuve as the voracious Marie-Hélène.



Gory details: 'Malice' will include more information on its video sleeve

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 071 436 2327

Four Weddings...

From David Aukin, Head of Drama, Channel 4

The ridiculous review you published of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (S&S June) explains much of why the British film industry has been going through such hard times. At last we have a truly successful British film, and all you can do is pour scorn on it. That attitude has done more to damage our industry than arguably any other single factor. The reason why I am writing to you is not because the review can in any way damage *Four Weddings and a Funeral* – which it clearly cannot – but because I do care about the BFI and I do care about British films. The narrow, blinkered vision that can so easily dismiss *Four Weddings* has nothing to offer British film-makers but can only damage our prospects at a time when they are beginning, at last, to look up.

London SW1

... and a Funeral

From Alan Madsen

Four Weddings and a Funeral has a lot of energy, but I was reminded of Birkin's comment on Gerald in Lawrence's *Women in Love*: "...but where does his go go to?" Yes, we agree, there is something terribly funny about weddings, but I think we get tired of laughing at them before the film gets tired of holding them up for ridicule. In the end, the film feels like a collection of stale wedding jokes.

Like Caren Myers (S&S June) I was reminded of sitcom humour, and I think the association indicates a failure of imagination that lets the audience down. Basically, the film's point of view is too narrow. Everything is presented from director Mike Newell's public schoolboy perspective, and while we are amused by the charms of adolescent preoccupations, we are also more than a little bored by them. Charles is a male Candide; things happen to him rather than because of him. The narrowness of the view is what finally stops the film from becoming truly comic rather than merely amusing.

I found the character of Carrie very disappointing. She magically appears and disappears, but there is no palpable relationship between her and Charles, and no attempt to construct one. The scene in the café where she recounts her numerous affairs destroys rather than builds rapport. Likewise his confession of love after it has been made clear she intends to marry someone else. The possibility for real communication between them is repeatedly blocked, and quite arbitrarily so in the face of their assumed passion for one another.

The superficiality of the film's attitude towards ritual is everywhere apparent, but perhaps most so in the funeral sequence where the entire meaning of the episode depends on Matthew's speech, and the authenticity of his grief over his lost friend, Gareth. This is genuinely moving, but there is little sense of human solidarity in grief. The film locates true feeling in an individual's sense of loss, in death and separation, and not in propagation and marriage. After-

wards Charles reflects on events and reconsiders his resistance to marriage, a resistance that he overcomes and then later reasserts.

Charles' choice of Henrietta is completely baffling, and is typical of much of the film's humour. The laughs frequently turn on something resembling a practical joke, rather than on some quality of character or circumstance. We are given a brief explanation for his choice after the funeral, but this is by no means convincing. He has spent the entire film running away from Henrietta, and for good reason, and for him then to make a complete about face is the stuff of slapstick, and very unfunny slapstick at that. Indeed, it all ends with him being punched in the face!

Charles', and the film's, hostility towards weddings finds its ultimate expression in his own, where at the last minute he reneges before the assembled congregation. Henrietta is thus subjected to a very profound, and very unnecessary, humiliation. I wondered if this vision of the worst affront possible to one's pride did not have something to do with Charles' inadequacies in courting Carrie? Does he declare his love for her after she has promised herself to someone else because rejection can be safely assumed and is thus, in a sense, not rejection at all?

Charles' weaknesses are not really explored, but held up for endearing nods of approval, whereas the idiosyncracies of the other characters are dealt with less generously. In the end, the male lead is a charming sociopath who undermines *Four Weddings and a Funeral*'s comic potential.

London N1

Women and Westerns

From Brian Chan

Claire Monk's review of *The Ballad of Little Jo* (S&S April) exemplifies an insecure love-hate attitude towards the power of genre movies by locating its otherwise fair reading of the film's textual achievements within the frame of an academic and I dare say pedantic question: is this really a Western? Or worse: is this a *real* Western, since "it's short on shoot-outs, and a sheep-rancher isn't quite a cowgirl"?

The fact that writer-director Maggie Greenwald successfully challenges the tyranny of such stereotypes, while making one of the best of recent American films (and not just a movie full of "moments of astuteness [that] compensate for plenty" missing from this not-quite-a-Western), is not celebrated so much as patronised, even though Monk seems unable to fault the film's revisionist feminist politics as revealed through its characterisations and storyline. I wonder whether Monk might have had anything to say about Greenwald's mastery of film language in the sense of the sight and the sound seeming an echo to the sense: that is, this is not just your average American plot-subservient set-up but, shot by shot, an exemplary work of international cinema that can stand confidently beside, say, the much-touted *The Piano*. Admirable though Jane Campion's film was, I myself believed it far less as a feminist text: for one, *Little Jo* doesn't bear the strain of trying to show how difficult life was/is through massive close-ups of muscle and mud.

I know how hard it must be to keep watching movies with an eye towards having to write about them, but isn't it absurd when a reviewer ends up half apologising for a film's not quite living up to the expectations of genre when part of its aesthetics and politics is obviously to hold those expectations up to question? Furthermore, isn't a certain imbalance involved when we decide on a film mostly by the exemplariness of its politics? What happened to those old questions: Is it art? Is it good? Why do I think so?

Alberta, Canada

Kieślowski and emotion

From Simon J. Kyte

Philip Strick's review of *Three Colours: White* (S&S June) denounces Krzysztof Kieślowski's meditations as having "little to do with France". Whoever suggested that this trilogy would have anything to do with France? Why should it? It's not about how countries deal with personal freedoms, it's about how we ourselves cope with them – or not, as the case may be.

Obviously there's some connection with Poland's current situation, but the relationship is a minor one. In Danusia Stok's *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, the director says, "I don't believe nations exist... they simply are." We are not dealing here with some facile document concerning either the nature or process of societal change, but with emotions. In the same book, he says, "What else is there other than emotions?" In Kieślowski's films (or at least his recent work) politics is something very distant from the individual – it appears occasionally but only as a backdrop, for example when Weronika walks out into the Rynek during a demonstration only to see Véronique for the first and only time.

In the same way, the trilogy does not use conventional colour symbolism. Colour is arbitrary on a political level, but not on a personal one. We respond to colour at a much deeper psychological level than we commonly appreciate, and Kieślowski has grasped its full potential: whether we are referring to the soupy yellows of Warsaw in *Decalogue* or the cold blues of *Blue* (even on the sheets of music) or the subtle golden tones of *The Double Life of Véronique*. We know we respond emotionally to colour: think only of Nykvist's cinematography for Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* for confirmation. Much of my own emotional response to *The Double Life of Véronique* and *Blue* was down to Zbigniew Preisner's soundtracks and Slawomir Idziak's cinematography. The latter may well be missed on *White*. The only potential problem I foresee with *Red* is that Irène Jacob may be stuck as Weronika – in *The Double Life* she was more than just the central character, she was the film. Few movies have centred to such a degree around one person.

The combination of quality and content in Kieślowski's recent films says much about what the New Europe ought to be like. The Cannes jury can come to whatever conclusions it wishes, but time will be the judge of a director who realised that we have the freedom as to whether to love or not, but that there is never any freedom from love.

Woodbridge, Suffolk



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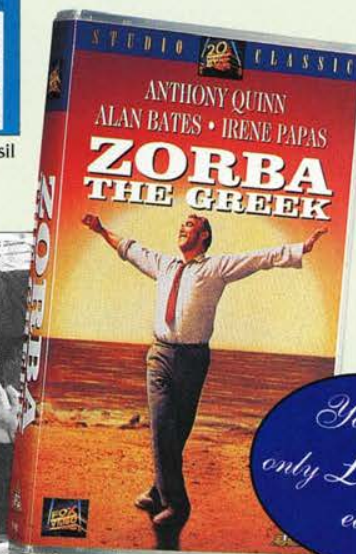


he goes to Crete to inspect his property. There he meets Alexis Zorba (Anthony Quinn), an uninhibited, larger-than-life Greek who persuades Basil that he can help him to re-establish the lignite mine.

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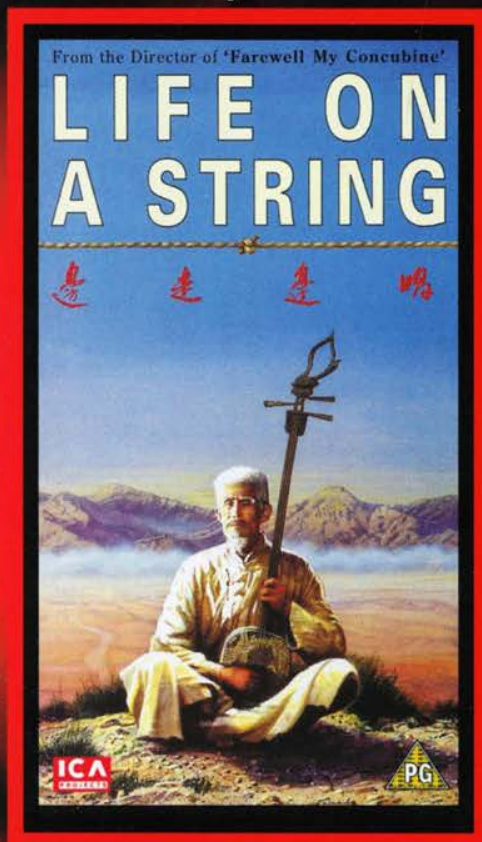
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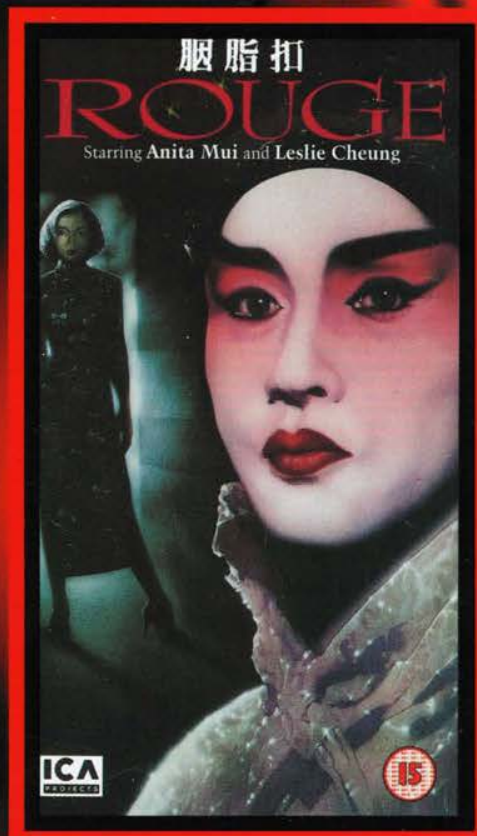
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